The One Ring™

Roleplaying Game

Fantasy Roleplaying in the World of The Hobbit™ and The Lord of the Rings™

Based on the novels by J.R.R. Tolkien

by Francesco Nepitello

- Credits -

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Dedicated to Anita, who was born when *The One Ring* was first discovered.
Francesco Nepitello, Venezia, 24 Maggio 2011

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... my friend, I wish I could persuade you to come here and see for yourself that what we accomplished together was not wasted in idleness. We have done much good since the slaying of the Dragon and the liberation of the Lonely Mountain. The splendour of our works far surpasses Thorin's grandest dreams of what we would accomplish, back when we were planning our little adventure.

To think that almost five years have passed! You might say that we didn't think much of you at the time. Now I miss very much our days together, and I would readily forfeit my peaceful life for one of dangerous adventure. Quite astonishing, I know, but I feel that sleeping under the stars with a sword at my side would ease my troubled mind.

I do not know precisely what troubles me, but disquiet weighs heavily upon my heart. The scourge of Smaug has been vanquished, the Necromancer has been driven out of his forest stronghold and, after the Battle of the Five Armies, the Goblins are afraid to leave their mountain holds. We have every reason to look forward to a new age of prosperity!

But something is wrong. I am not the only one to perceive it. A shadow, felt but unseen. The presence of a nameless threat that forbids people to rejoice fully in the hope and confidence that should follow the return of the light.

Nonsense? Possibly. I am an old Dwarf after all, and those who hearken to me are but a few. For every voice that dares to whisper words of warning, far too many answer that our recent victories have earned us a respite. Despite my nagging sense of unease, complacency is rife.

Dearest Bilbo, deep inside of me I feel that we should remain vigilant and warn others against the risks of self-congratulation. Everyone around us seems to look inwards instead, to their own concerns and the goings-on right in front of their noses. Soon I will confer with Gandalf upon these matters, and possibly come to visit you in the kindly West.

From a letter from Balin, son of Fundin, to Bilbo Baggins, Esq.

Home is behind, the world ahead,
And there are many paths to tread

It is the year 2946 of the Third Age, and the lands east of the Misty Mountains are astir. From the cloud-shrouded peaks above the High Pass to the spider-infested gloom of the forest of Mirkwood, paths long-deserted are trodden once again. Busy merchants carry their wares to new markets, messengers bring tidings from foreign realms, and kings send forth armed men to extend their influence and the rule of law. Some say that a new age of freedom has begun, a time for adventure and great deeds to reclaim glories lost in long centuries of oppression and decline.

But adventures are not really things that people go out and look for. They are dangerous and rarely end well. While it is true that a handful of valiant individuals set out to make their mark on the world, for others it seems that adventure chooses *them*, as though it is the path they are fated to tread. They are restless warriors, curious scholars and wanderers, always eager to seek what was lost or explore what was forgotten. Ordinary people call them *adventurers*, and when they return successful, they call them *heroes*. But if they fail, no one will even remember their names...

In The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, you take the part of the heroes of Middle-earth. You will travel the land, uncover its secrets, take part in its unfolding history and encounter its inhabitants and legends. As the Shadow creeps back across the lands of the Free Peoples, you will uncover hints of what is happening, and have the chance to play a part in the struggle against the Enemy.*

Part One: Introduction

- Prologue -

"This is the Master-ring,
the One Ring to rule them all."

The One Ring is a roleplaying game based on the *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, two extraordinary works of fiction by the beloved author and respected academic, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien. With these books, Tolkien introduced readers to his own greatest creation, the world of Middle-earth. A mythic land from a remote past, its rich history and detailed geography were created over the course of many years.

With *The One Ring*, Middle-earth is yours to explore. This guide provides you with the rules of the game and rich information on the people, places and adversaries you could encounter during your adventures.

Where to Start

This volume contains all the information players need to know to get started. The introductory section discusses the way roleplaying games work, describes the area of Middle-earth where your first adventure will begin, and outlines the basic rules of the game. The following sections show you how to create your own unique hero – the character that you will take the part of in your adventures. Finally, the guide introduces some of the more commonly-used rules – such as combat and travel – in more detail. But don't be put off by the length of the guide – the game is not as complicated as the page count might suggest. The basic rules are only a few pages long and most of the time only require you to make one or two dice rolls to resolve your actions.

The second half of this guide, from **Part Six: The Loremaster** onwards, is intended for the Loremaster, the person who will be running the game; don't worry if you're not familiar with this terminology, it is described below.

The guide contains the rules needed to create adventures and tie them together into an ongoing epic. All important game mechanics are discussed in depth, to introduce even an inexperienced Loremaster to the world of roleplaying, and the guide also includes an introductory adventure to get things started.

What is a Roleplaying Game?

Thanks to video, computer and online games, millions of people today are familiar with roleplaying games. Players create fictional heroes and explore shared worlds populated by computer-controlled creatures and, in online games, accessed by a multitude of other players. *The One Ring* is a pen-and-paper version of the same type of game, with players meeting face-to-face around a table and the computer replaced by one person – the Loremaster – acting as narrator and referee.

Each player plays the role of a single character during the game. The player designs every part of the character, from personality to appearance, and chooses its skills and abilities. Players are encouraged to play 'in character' as much as possible, as this helps to bring the game alive.

The Loremaster doesn't take the role of a character, but is instead in charge of describing the setting and managing what happens to the players when they interact with the game world. He begins each session of play by setting the scene, plays the parts of the people and creatures the characters encounter, and adjudicates the consequences of the heroes' actions. Gameplay takes the form of a continuous conversation between the Loremaster and his players; a dialogue that, with the help of the rules, gives birth to a story that is created by and enjoyed by everyone involved.

As much as *The One Ring* is a storytelling experience, it remains a game. To play it, everybody relies on a set of rules not very different from those of a traditional board game.

Dice are used to determine the success – or failure – of the characters' most important actions (with more simple actions resolved through common sense). The rules for the game are straightforward and easy to learn and, most importantly, should not interfere with everybody having a good time.

Example of Play

Imagine that we are listening in as a game session begins. There are four people sitting around the table – Jennifer, Stuart, Claire and Nick...

Nick (the Loremaster): Okay, at the end of the last session you had arrived in Dale with the message of warning that King Thranduil demanded you deliver to King Bard. You emerge from the Traders' Gate into the Merchants' Quarter. Large warehouses line the street ahead of you, and carts laden with goods are heading in both directions. From a gap between warehouses to the right, you can see a large boat tied to the jetty on the river – you can hear its timbers creak as it heaves on its moorings. Which way are you going to head?

Jennifer (playing Lifstan, a Barding): Lifstan grew up in Dale, so he'd know where we should go, wouldn't he?

Nick: Yes, he would know that King Bard's Royal Palace is near the centre of the town – straight ahead to the market square then off to the left a bit.

Jennifer (as Lifstan): "Follow me; I'll take us to Bard's palace."

Stuart (as Trotter): "Lead the way."

Jennifer: I lead everyone up the street towards the palace.

Claire (playing The Bride): I'm following.

Nick: You walk along the street, being careful to avoid the carts and porters bustling around you. It takes you about five minutes to get to the square, a large expanse opening up from the narrow streets of Dale, crowded with canvas-roofed stalls and thronged with people. The noise of haggling traders, laughing children and musicians entertaining the crowd is overwhelming. At the side of the square to your left is an impressive building with marble columns. In front of it is a fountain featuring an enormous Dragon; Jennifer, Lifstan would know that it commemorates the defeat of Smaug, and stands in front of the palace.

Jennifer (as Lifstan): "There's the palace. Let's see if my liege is accepting visitors."

Claire (as The Bride): "He'd better be. King Thranduil seemed to feel his message was urgent!"

Stuart (as Trotter): "Let's find out." We make our way around the square to the palace.

Nick: It takes a few minutes to get around the edge of the crowd, but you're soon approaching the palace gate. Two men-at-arms stand in front of the closed doors, eyeing you suspiciously.

Jennifer (as Lifstan): "Well met, countrymen. I have urgent business with King Bard."

Nick (playing one of the men-at-arms, in a gruff voice): "The King will receive no more visitors today. Come back tomorrow."

Stuart: Are there any trees that I can try to sneak behind while they are talking to Lifstan?

Nick: Sadly not.

Claire: I'm going to try to awe them with my war-like appearance and the importance of our cause.

Claire (as The Bride): "We come directly from King Thranduil with a message of dire warnings. Surely the wise King Bard would wish to hear such tidings, that we have bested many foes to deliver."

Nick: Okay, you need to make an **Awe** task roll with a difficulty of 14.

Claire: I have three levels in my **Awe** skill, so I'm rolling three Success dice and the Feat die... for a total of 18, including two success icons!

Nick: The men-at-arms visibly pale at the thought that they might have slighted such awe-inspiring warriors on such a quest. They stammer their apologies and usher you through the door. They ask that you wait for a moment in the grand entrance hall, and one rushes off through a doorway to alert the King to your presence...

A Note on Gender

All references to players and the Loremaster in the game text use the masculine pronoun for ease of expression: this should not be interpreted as excluding female players, characters or Loremasters. Although Middle-earth in the Third Age is not a place where women often choose a life of adventure, Tolkien's books introduced some memorable exceptions, providing ample inspiration to players who want to play female heroes.

Setting

The One Ring is set in the period between the conclusion of the events narrated in *The Hobbit* and the culmination of the terrible struggle described in the pages of *The Lord of the Rings* – the Twilight of the Third Age.

Encompassing more than seventy years, this time is ushered in when Bilbo the Hobbit finds the Ruling Ring, and culminates many decades later with the final confrontation between the Free Peoples and the Dark Lord Sauron, and the destruction of the Ring. It is an exciting time, offering plenty of opportunities for adventuring in a land witnessing the end of an era.

In this volume, the game introduces the dangerous lands known collectively as Wilderland and covers the years immediately following the adventures of Bilbo the Hobbit and his companions. This region provides an excellent starting point for players entering Middle-earth for the first time, as recent events have brought the area to the forefront of history. This guide introduces the main rules of the game, and is all you need for many hours of adventure in Middle-earth.

Future supplements for *The One Ring* will progressively widen the geographical boundaries of the setting, while adventures and campaigns will detail events further along the timeline. *Rivendell*, for example, takes your company west across the Misty Mountains to begin exploring Eriador, while the *Darkening of Mirkwood* advances the Tale of Years to 2977 as the heroes engage in a 30-year quest set within Mirkwood.

- Wilderland -

... he knew how evil and danger had grown and thriven in the Wild, since the dragons had driven men from the lands, and the Goblins had spread in secret after the battle of the Mines of Moria.

The lands extending from the Misty Mountains as far as the Running River are known as Wilderland. There are many good reasons for such an ominous name. Not only did the region once host a Dragon's lair, but its greater part is occupied by the forest of Mirkwood, home to giant spiders, Orcs and other dangerous creatures.

Nevertheless, Wilderland has changed significantly in recent years. Smaug, the Dragon of Erebor, bane of the Northern world, has been killed, and the Necromancer has been driven from his fastness in Southern Mirkwood. Many proud folk are reclaiming their lost dominions: to the north rises the Lonely Mountain, a solitary peak that houses an underground stronghold of Dwarves of the line of Durin; on the valley below stands Dale, a city of Northmen newly rebuilt from its ruins, close to the trading town of Esgaroth on the Long Lake; from hidden halls dug under the northern

eaves of Mirkwood issue again the hosts of King Thranduil, ruler of the Wood-elves; near the Ford of Carrock on the river Anduin, the Beornings, a folk of Men following the lead of Beorn the Skin-changer, keep their watch; while to the south the settlements of the Woodmen are multiplying along the vale of the Great River.

Year 2946 of the Third Age

Five years ago, in the year 2941 of the Third Age in the reckoning of the Elves and the Men of the West, a fierce battle shook the roots of Erebor, the Lonely Mountain. Orcs, Wild Wolves, Men, Dwarves and Elves clashed under a sky darkened by giant bats, their hatred fuelled by ancient quarrels. Many deeds of renown were done that day, and some heroes prevailed while others fell, in the end delivering a crushing victory for the Free Peoples of the North.

A new alliance was born from the aftermath of that battle, now remembered as the Battle of Five Armies. In fact, if it hadn't been for the threat of Bolg's invading host, rallying the Free Peoples under a single banner, the long years of petty misunderstandings would have flared into open warfare. The spirits of Elves, Men and Dwarves were embittered and made miserable by the growing darkness of Mirkwood and the ever-present menace of the great Dragon of Erebor.

Each community had become suspicious of its neighbours and limited their dealings to meagre trades. When the din of battle subsided, the surviving Free Peoples looked upon each other with an open heart once again.

The Free Folks of the North

Once freed from the threat of Smaug the Dragon, and with two thirds of the Goblin warriors of the North eradicated, the inhabitants of the northern regions of Wilderland have the opportunity to finally look forward to a prosperous future. But five years after the Dragon's demise, peace is still a fragile thing over the edge of the Wild, to be cared for and looked after, especially for those who dwell in its darkest corners.

Bardings

Bard the Bowman, of the line of Girion – slayer of the Dragon, shooter of the Black Arrow – has been crowned King of Dale after successfully reclaiming his kingdom. Five years ago, he led those who chose to follow him north, leaving behind the ruins of Lake-town. Warriors and craftsmen from the Long Lake came to rebuild Dale, and farmers from the lands to the south and west tilled the fields. Trees soon started to bear fruit and birds sang again where the desolation of Smaug once extended in ominous silence. Much sought-after help arrived from King Dáin of Erebor, and from King Thranduil of the Woodland Realm. Both rulers remember and honour Bard's role in their present fortunes, and his generosity after the Battle of Five Armies.

The number of Bard's followers has steadily increased as ever more people gather in the valley under the Mountain to recognise his valour and rightful kingship. The Bardings, as the inhabitants of Dale are now known, are becoming a powerful folk. They finally feel safe from direct threats and are prosperous and well armed, with a king whose daring might soon prompt him to unite the scattered settlements found along the River Running into a wider kingdom of Men.

Beornings

In the years following the liberation of the Lonely Mountain, Beorn the Skin-changer became a great chief, gathering many men from far and wide under his command, starting with solitary hunters and fighters used to the harsh life of the wild. Now, under Beorn's leadership, the Beornings are recognised by all to be a valiant and trusty people, sworn to fight the Shadow and its minions (when they are not following Beorn's footsteps and acting as beekeepers and bakers of honey-cakes!).

Nobody knows why Beorn, a lonely hunter of Orcs and Wild Wolves, decided to welcome outsiders to his hall. He did so all of a sudden, after the Battle of Five Armies and the death of Thorin Oakenshield.

Today the Beornings rule a domain comprising the Carrock, the Old Ford and High Pass, and the land around them. They have made it their duty to watch over the passes and river crossings of their land, exacting tolls from all who ask to pass under their escort, and forbidding passage to all sorts of malevolent creatures.

Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain

When Thorin Oakenshield died during the Battle of Five Armies, his close kinsman Dáin Ironfoot from the Iron Hills stepped in to lead the people of Durin. Dáin, a battle-hardened warrior, proved to be a wise King from the very beginning when he dealt out treasure from the Dragon's hoard with an open hand to those who could rightfully claim a share of it.

Under his reign, Erebor has thrived, enjoying good relations with the neighbouring realms, and the magnificence of the Kingdom under the Mountain itself has exceeded Thorin's dreams: the vast underground stronghold, dug after the fashion of the Dwarves since they first awakened in Middle-earth, is now the most prosperous dwarf-colony active in the Northern world.

Dwarf craftsmen labour in the city of Dale, Barding apprentices work the bellows in the forges under the mountain, and traders come and go from the Front Gate of Erebor to bring the products of the Dwarves' cunning handiwork to distant lands.

Innumerable treasures of worth far surpassing anything made by modern hands are said to grace the deep chambers of the Dwarven city. The few envoys who have been granted access to the halls of the King speak of the wonders of the subterranean palace, foremost among them that which now sits on the unmoving breast of Thorin Oakenshield: the fabled Arkenstone, Heart of the Mountain.

Elves of Mirkwood

Thranduil the Elvenking sits on his throne of carven wood, the ruler of his realm since the end of the previous age of the world. A prince of lofty lineage, he is a survivor of cruel wars that have had an enormous effect on his personality and outlook. Obeying his own foreboding heart's counsel, he long ago resolved to forsake the light of the stars and build a strong fastness under the earth to guard his people.

The great hall of Thranduil lies underground, dug within the northern borders of the Forest of Mirkwood. This choice, odd as it may seem for a lord reigning over a people so fond of the rustling of leaves, is in truth not so unusual for one who has fought the forces of darkness for countless centuries, and could often only find refuge from the Enemy in secrecy and remoteness.

Though under siege, the Wood-elves were still able to find solace above ground; some live in houses and huts deep in the forest, or high among the branches of the tallest beech trees, unseen to mortal eyes who cannot distinguish their abodes from their surroundings. The few guests who enter the gates of Thranduil's Palace on an invitation from the Elvenking, thinking to descend into a cold dungeon of stone, will be surprised, for this stronghold is unlike any fortress built by Men or even Dwarves. Its passages are twisting and echoing; its halls are airy, with pillars hewn out of the living stone and darkness chased away by bright lamps and red torchlight. Its inhabitants are ready to sing and take up the harp, as soon as their hands have let their bows and spears rest along the tapestried walls. But let any trespassers beware: for the Elves of Mirkwood are as cruel with foes as they are gracious to friends.

Hobbits of the Shire

The slaying of the Dragon Smaug and the diminishing power of the Goblins and Orcs have had a profound effect even beyond the Misty Mountains. Rumours have reached the West of a new prosperity for all folks living in the Northern world. But even if the mountain passes are not as dangerous as before, the Wild is still the Wild and, for Hobbits living in their distant and comfortable holes, every hint of inconvenience or danger is a good reason to stay home and to forget about dwarf-gold and dragon-hoards!

But buried inside many young Hobbits is an adventurous side, a hunger to see the world and meet other folks. Stories of brave deeds and adventure can sometimes overwhelm certain Hobbits' natural resistance to impulsive behaviour and send them out on the Road to see mountains and Elves.

But who knows where these unfortunate fellows have actually gone? Did they even cross the Shire boundaries before Hobbit common sense turned them back, or did they succeed in following the East-West Road to the mountain passes?

Woodmen of Wilderland

The Woodmen of Wilderland are Northmen dwelling in the lands south of the Old Ford as far as the Gladden Fields, between the Misty Mountains and the southwestern eaves of Mirkwood. They are a hardy folk, composed of many families and greater clans, but much diminished by the many wars that have wracked Middle-earth. It is a testament to their tenacity that they have overcome every difficulty they have faced, even learning how to survive in the shadow of a fortress of the Enemy itself: the dreaded tower of the Necromancer.

The strength of the Woodmen is in their unity. They all feel an unshakable bond of kinship with each other, scattered as they may be in their homesteads and small towns, inside the western borders of the forest or on the other side of the Great River, at the roots of the mountains, and gather often, to celebrate seasonal festivals, marriages and funerals, to form hunting parties to gather food, or to assemble a host in time of need.

For many years the Woodmen have been assisted by the Wizard, Radagast the Brown. A tender of beasts, Radagast has instructed birds and other creatures to watch over the Woodmen's homes, to warn them in case of danger. Often, Woodmen go to his abode to seek the Wizard's advice, looking for him inside the fenced girth of Rhosgobel.

The Shadow

The darkest legends of all folks living in the Northwest of Middle-earth speak of an evil power, an age-old Enemy whose greatest desire is to cover all the lands in darkness. Ancient beyond reckoning, this Shadow has taken many shapes, always in the attempt to conquer and consume all who opposed it. It suffered many defeats at the hands of valiant kings and the Powers of the world themselves, only to rise again in a new guise.

Almost two-thousand years ago, this Shadow entered Greenwood the Great, the forest of Wilderland. It secretly crept around a naked hill in the south, and built Dol Guldur, the Hill of Sorcery. From there, the darkness spread under the eaves of the forest, slowly turning it into a place of horror and dread. Many animals fled, leaving behind them an eerie silence, while other creatures crept in, as though heeding the call of a dark master: Orcs and giant spiders began to multiply, threatening all who entered or lived near the Forest.

The folks who called the wild wood their home suffered greatly, and soon forgot the beauty of Greenwood the Great, renaming it Mirkwood. Among them, the Silvan Elves and the Woodmen living along its western borders endured to this day, but not without much strife. The Elves retreated to their fortress underground beyond the mountain range that crosses the forest in the north, while the Woodmen learnt to survive in small groups to escape the Shadow's notice. They started to refer to the dark presence occupying Dol Guldur as the Necromancer, failing to recognise it as the ancient Enemy.

Some years ago, a council of the Wise resolved to chase away the Shadow in the Forest once and for all. Powerful lords gathered their strength, and the Shadow fled to the East. The Forest finally knew a moment of respite, but the darkness of Mirkwood is now centuries old, and its hold on the forest's deepest recesses is still strong. It will take many years for the Free Folks of the North to reclaim and cleanse the wood in its entirety, and only if the Shadow is kept away.

Regions of Wilderland

Wilderland stretches between the Misty Mountains to the west, the forbidding Grey Mountains to the north, the river Redwater to the east and the Brown Lands to the south. In this age of insular communities and limited travel, most new maps cover small areas, rarely extending beyond the land governed by the king or chieftain who commissioned them.

The map overleaf of Wilderland is a rare piece, compiled using information collected by Bilbo the Hobbit during his journey, and completed with material gathered at a later date from wandering Elves and Dwarves visiting the Shire.

the ONE RING
-Wilderland-
Mount Gundabad
Grey Mountains
Withered Heath
Mount Gram
Misty Mountains
Elves of Mirkwood
Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain
The Waste
Ettenmoors
Forest River
Elven King's Halls
Erebor
Dale
Long Lake
Esgaroth
Bardings
Iron Hills
Forest Gate
Elf-path
Long Marshes
Coldfells
River Hoarwell
Eagles' Eyrie
Carrock
Beorn's House
Goblin Town
Trollshaws
Beornings
Mountains of Mirkwood
High Pass
Rivendell
Old Ford
Old Forest Road
to The Shire
Redwater
Woodland Hall
Mountain Hall
Woodmen
Running River
Woodmen Town
River Loudwater
Mountain Pass
River Gladden
Gladden Fields
Rhosgobel
East Bight
The Narrows of the Forest
to Dorwinion
Redhorn Pass
Moria
Dimrill Dale
Great River of Wilderland
Dol Guldur
Lórien
Miles
0
50
100
150
N

- how to play -

"The board is set, and the pieces are moving."

In *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, the players assume the role of adventurers, bold individuals travelling across Middle-earth. The exception to this is the person who takes the mantle of the Loremaster – the referee and director whose task is presenting the players with interesting challenges, worthy opponents and exciting stories. *The One Ring* can be played with as few as two people (one player plus the Loremaster), and with as many as six players or more. All that is needed is paper, pencils, imagination, and a love for Tolkien's imaginary world.

To start the game, all players must create the character they wish to play, using the rules contained in **Part Two: Creating a Hero**, while the Loremaster comes up with an adventure 'hook', the beginning of a story (a ready-to-play adventure is included in **Part Nine: The Marsh Bell** to help speed things up). The characters created by the players begin the game as a newly formed group of adventurers, recently united by a common cause or pressing need. They are going to be the protagonists of the tale about to be told, and their actions will determine if they are destined to become heroes, whose deeds will help turn back the encroaching darkness, or if they will perish in the attempt.

Player-Heroes

Players experience the dark years of Middle-earth's late Third Age by playing the roles of the characters they create. To accomplish this, a player needs to step into his character's shoes and guide his actions, trying to think as the hero would think and reacting as the hero would react. It is a game of make-believe, a story in the making, created in collaboration with the Loremaster.

The next chapter, **Creating a Hero**, presents all the information needed to design a fully detailed hero. Players should beware, though, that the rules and information contained in this guide must be used as a painter would use colours: it needs imagination to give depth to your character, to add meaning to the numbers, and to really bring them to life.

The Loremaster

The entire world and history of Middle-earth lie in the hands of the Loremaster and his players, ready to be explored, interpreted and reinvented. As players develop the story of their adventures, the Loremaster confronts them with unforeseen problems and plot twists, leading to the creation of a new epic, focused entirely around the deeds of the company and its members. To achieve this goal, the Loremaster describes the locales where the action is taking place, plays the part of the people they meet, and uses the rules to fairly adjudicate the outcome of the actions proposed by the players.

The second half of this volume, beginning with **Part Six: The Loremaster**, contains additional rules and guidelines that a Loremaster might need in his role of referee, narrator and director, along with suggestions on how to work with his players to create stories that are both engaging and faithful to the world as depicted in the source material.

Structure of the Game

Telling and participating in stories is at the heart of *The One Ring*. The Loremaster sets the scene, plays the parts of the people encountered and interprets the outcomes of the players' actions, but what makes these stories come alive is the interaction between the Loremaster and the players.

To facilitate this creative interaction, each adventure is structured in two phases: an Adventuring phase, usually taking the largest part of the gameplay, and a closing Fellowship phase.

During the Adventuring phase, the Loremaster presents the beginning of the adventure to the players. Seen at their most basic level, most adventures start with one or more challenges that the players react to. As the phase develops, the course of action chosen by the players take the gameplay in different directions, leading to further challenges or to the conclusion of the adventure. When the players finally overcome the challenges put forth by the Loremaster, or fail without recourse, the Adventuring phase comes to an end.

At this point the players start a Fellowship phase, narrating what their characters do when they finally return from their adventuring or rest for a while. During this phase, it is the Loremaster's turn to act reactively, by listening to his players' propositions and wishes, and making sure that the rules are correctly applied.

Following this structure, every adventure will see the player-heroes take part in a significant chain of events and follow them through a conclusive resolution.

Structure and the Experienced Gamer

The game structure presented here is a tool to help the Loremaster. Experienced gamers might find it artificial or intrusive, but the same structure is present in most roleplaying games – it just isn't referred to as explicitly. For example, at the end of an adventure, players usually pause to spend experience points. In *The One Ring*, the Fellowship phase not only allows this to happen, but provides a narrative reason for it, and also presents a lot more options. If the players are not ready to stop for a Fellowship phase, they can have a short pause representing a week's rest at a nearby settlement, or even carry straight on into the next adventure, if they prefer.

Other elements of the structure, such as episodes, narrative time, and storytelling initiative, are included to help new Loremasters structure the story, but are likely to be something that an experienced Loremaster already features in his games.

In short, the structure can be as obvious or invisible as you want it to be, depending on your group's preferred style of play.

Usually, a full adventure should not take more than two or three sessions of play to complete, with the Adventuring phase taking up most of the game time, and the Fellowship phase occupying the last half evening or so of play. After a few games, players and Loremasters alike will find that what happens in the two distinct phases of the game is actually closely interrelated, as the events arising during an Adventuring phase lead the players to make certain choices during the following Fellowship phase.

In turn, the Loremaster will find it very easy to tie the next Adventuring phase into what happened during the previous Fellowship phase. The final result is an ongoing epic that grows out of the lives of the characters created by the players and their deeds.

By way of comparison, the events narrated in *The Hobbit* can be seen as a series of four linked adventures:

1. The first Adventuring phase sees the characters leave Hobbiton to journey into the Wild and reach Rivendell; the conclusive Fellowship phase is spent as guests of Elrond Halfelven.

2. The following Adventuring phase sees the company reach the Misty Mountains, travel across them, and eventually spend the Fellowship phase in the house of Beorn.

3. The third Adventuring phase follows the Hobbit and his Dwarf companions as they travel across Mirkwood and are made prisoners of the Elvenking, to finally spend a Fellowship phase in Lake-town.

4. The final Adventuring phase witnesses the exploration of the Lonely Mountain, the killing of Smaug, and the final Battle of Five Armies. The last Fellowship phase is resolved with all companions having returned to their respective homes.

Episodes and Narrative Time

Time passes at different rates in stories: one evening spent playing *The One Ring* may detail a single day in the life of an adventurer, or skim over a year or more of his career. During a session, the passage of time is represented mainly in two ways: with detailed, focused episodes that require players to closely interact with the story, or in a quicker, less-descriptive fashion called narrative time, most appropriate when dealing with prolonged or time-consuming events, like journeys, sieges or other endeavours that occur 'off-screen'. The Loremaster and his players don't need to acknowledge when the gameplay shifts from one time scale to another, as the average game session actually passes smoothly from one mode to the other, but the rules presented here use this distinction for the sake of explanation.

Storytelling Initiative

During the game, and especially in the two distinct phases of play, the Loremaster and his players take turns in holding the main storytelling initiative. This means that while in the Adventuring phase, the Loremaster is the primary storyteller – he is in charge of coming up with the story hook, managing challenges and narrating the results of the characters' actions as determined by the rules – during a Fellowship phase, it is the turn of the players to present to the Loremaster their ideas and intentions – for example, to choose where they are going to rest, and to decide what they will do while they are there.

But things are not always so clear-cut; there are several moments during the game when the storytelling initiative passes from the Loremaster to the players or vice versa. For example, while players are usually considered to have the storytelling initiative for everything concerning their characters, as they choose their player-heroes' actions and words at any time, it is possible to lose that prerogative when a hero suffers from the taint of corruption and loses control of himself. And while the Loremaster is, under most circumstances, the primary storyteller during an Adventuring phase, the clever use of a character's qualities might let a player briefly derail the narration to conform to his own wishes.

Character Sheet

A hero is defined in the game by a collection of traits and numbers, describing his physical, spiritual and mental attributes and the extent of his knowledge and capability as an adventurer. These values influence how the character interacts with the game rules, so it is important that they are close at hand and easy to keep track of.

For ease of reference, all players get a character sheet, a descriptive form that is easily compiled and updated as a player-hero grows in experience. A character sheet has two sides: the front of the sheet contains all the information concerning the personal characteristics of the adventurer, while the back is used mainly to record his deeds and the exploits of the company he belongs to.

A blank character sheet can be found on the next two pages (and on page 314), and a .PDF version can be downloaded from **www.theonering.info**

The One Ring™

Experience

Total

Name ______________________________

Culture ____________________ Standard of Living ____________________

Cultural Blessing ____

____

Calling ____________________ Shadow weakness ____________________

Valour

- TRAITS -

Specialities ____

Distinctive Features ____

Wisdom

- ATTRIBUTES -

Body Favoured   Heart Favoured   Wits Favoured

- COMMON SKILLS -

Awe	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Inspire	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Persuade	☐☐☐☐☐☐
Athletics	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Travel	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Stealth	☐☐☐☐☐☐
Awareness	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Insight	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Search	☐☐☐☐☐☐
Explore	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Healing	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Hunting	☐☐☐☐☐☐
Song	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Courtesy	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Riddle	☐☐☐☐☐☐
Craft	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Battle	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Lore	☐☐☐☐☐☐

- SKILL GROUPS -

personality	◇◇◇
movement	◇◇◇
perception	◇◇◇
survival	◇◇◇
custom	◇◇◇
vocation	◇◇◇

- WEAPON SKILLS -

________	☐☐☐☐☐☐	________	☐☐☐☐☐☐	________	☐☐☐☐☐☐
________	☐☐☐☐☐☐	________	☐☐☐☐☐☐	________	☐☐☐☐☐☐

Damage

Ranged

- REWARDS -

- VIRTUES -

Parry

Shield

Armour

Head gear

- GEAR -

weapon ________	damage ____	edge ____	injury ____	enc ____
weapon ________	damage ____	edge ____	injury ____	enc ____
weapon ________	damage ____	edge ____	injury ____	enc ____

armour ________ enc ____

headgear ________ enc ____

shield ________ enc ____

Endurance

Rating

Fatigue

Hope

Rating

Shadow

Weary

Miserable

Wounded

Fellowship | Advancement Points | Treasure | Standing

- BACKGROUND -

- COMPANY -

Guide

Scout

Huntsman

Look-out Man

Fellowship Focus

- FELLOWSHIP PHASE -

Sanctuaries

Patron

- TALE OF YEARS -

Year	Event description	Year	Event description

Glossary of Terms

As you can see from the character sheet, the game makes use of several specific terms. Here are some definitions to help you get started.

Character Sheet Front

Name: Here is where a player writes the name chosen for his character. As the various folks of Middle-earth follow different naming conventions, players are advised to select a name from those provided as typical examples of each culture in **Part Two: Creating a Hero**.

Culture: The cultural group the player-hero belongs to. Choosing a character's Culture is probably the most important choice to be made when creating a player-hero. There are six playable Cultures in this volume of *The One Ring*: Bardings, Beornings, Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain, Elves of Mirkwood, Hobbits of the Shire and Woodmen of Wilderland.

Standard of Living: This summarises a culture's level of prosperity. A cultural Standard of Living can limit a hero's ability to get hold of certain items.

Cultural Blessing: A cultural blessing describes a special ability or quality so profoundly ingrained in a given community that in the game it is made available to all its members.

Calling: A character's calling is what motivated him to seek a life of adventure and keeps him on that dangerous path every day. There are five different callings to choose from, each one exemplifying a different adventurous drive: player-heroes can be Scholars, Slayers, Treasure-hunters, Wanderers or Wardens. Callings let a player customise his character concept and help him focus on the beliefs and goals that give him a sense of purpose.

Shadow Weakness: This represents a hero's main flaw, the weak point that the Shadow might exploit to corrupt his spirit. Shadow weaknesses are based upon a character's calling.

Traits: Traits are peculiar features that individualise a player-hero, qualities (and sometimes flaws) that are used by players to personalise their characters, building upon their strengths and weaknesses. Players select Traits when they choose their character's culture, background and calling.

Attributes: Body, Heart and Wits describe respectively the physical, spiritual and mental profile of a character. These numerical scores are the primary building blocks of a character, and describe his aptitudes and natural capabilities. Each Attribute has a basic rating, determined by his background, and a favoured rating, found by adding a bonus. An Attribute's basic rating is recorded in the bigger square box, and the favoured rating is recorded in the smaller circle.

Common Skills: Common skills represent the things a hero has learnt to do. Their value is recorded by filling the relevant number of boxes. At several moments during character creation, players are instructed to underline with a pencil the name of a skill, to mark it as favoured. Favoured skills describe a character's peculiar talent in the field described by the ability.

Skill Categories: Skills are organised vertically into columns, grouping the abilities by the Attribute that is considered most influential. Thus, there are six Body skills, six Heart skills and six Wits skills.

Skill Groups: The eighteen Common skills are organised by relationship into rows, defining six skill groups: personality, movement, perception, survival, custom and vocation. Each skill group name is followed by a row of three boxes, to be checked when a hero does something worthy of an Advancement point.

Weapon Skills: Weapon skills describe a character's ability with weapons, like swords, axes, or bows. Players choose their heroes' Weapon skills from two predefined cultural fighting styles. As happens with Common skills, Weapon skills may also be underlined to be marked as favoured skills. Weapon skill names within brackets

indicate a cultural weapon skill, allowing a character to use a wider selection of weapons, for example: (Spears).

Experience: When they start adventuring, characters change and grow by gaining and using Experience points, accumulated by players after each session. The bigger box is used to record any Experience points received during the current Adventuring phase, while the smaller box is used to keep track of the total Experience received – and spent – by a player thus far.

Valour: A character's Valour rank describes his stature as a doer of great deeds, and is a measure of his courage in the face of dangerous situations or opponents. Each time a player-hero attains a new Valour rank, he receives a Reward, as an acknowledgement of his actions.

Wisdom: A character's Wisdom rank defines his self-understanding and capability for good judgement, and is a measure of his resistance to the corrupting power of the Shadow. Each time a player-hero attains a new Wisdom rank, he receives a Virtue, as a consequence of his awareness.

Virtues: Virtues are unique abilities and special talents, characteristic of a given culture. Players select a Virtue when their player-hero is raised to a new Wisdom rank.

Rewards: Rewards are pieces of war gear of superior craftsmanship, granted to a player-hero as an award for his deeds. Players receive a Reward when their player-hero attains a new Valour rank.

Gear: The equipment carried by the character, along with its Encumbrance rating.

Endurance: Endurance is the expression of a player-hero's physical stamina and determination. It is reduced when a character is subjected to physical harm, stress and exhaustion.

Fatigue: The weight and encumbrance of the gear carried by a character may limit his performance. A hero is considered Weary as long as his Endurance score is found to be equal to or lower than his Fatigue threshold.

Hope: A character's Hope score defines the reserves of spiritual vigour that heroes draw upon when put in danger. Players can choose to spend a point of Hope to tap a player-hero's energy reserves and possibly push him beyond his limits.

Shadow: A hero's Shadow rating undermines his Hope score, as his spirit is being weakened and corrupted. A hero is considered Miserable as long as his Hope score is equal or lower than his current Shadow rating.

Damage: The character's Damage rating indicates the potential of a hero to do substantial harm to an opponent when able to hit with force and precision, using a close combat or ranged weapon. The smaller damage box on the character sheet, marked ranged, is used when a hero's damage using melee weapons differs from that when using ranged weapons.

Parry: A hero's Parry score reflects his ability to deflect or in any way avoid an incoming blow. Carrying a shield of any type enhances a character's Parry rating.

Armour: Characters wear armour to avoid suffering lasting damage in combat. Usually composed of several layers of protective garments, armour is always burdensome and heavy. A character can wear a headpiece to complement his defensive gear.

Weary: This box is checked when a hero has been made Weary. A Weary character suffers a penalty when taking actions until he is able to rest properly.

Miserable: This box is checked when a hero has been made Miserable. A Miserable character is in danger of suffering a bout of madness and temporarily lose control of himself

Wounded: When the attack of an enemy successfully overcomes a character's defences and his protective garments fail to safeguard him, he is Wounded.

If a Wounded character is Wounded a second time, he is knocked out.

Character Sheet Back

Fellowship: This box is used to record the number of points left in a company's Fellowship pool. Every player keeps track of its current score, even if the pool is a common one.

Advancement Points: Here players keep track of the number of Advancement points their heroes have accumulated. These points are spent to raise a hero's Common skill scores.

Treasure: Heroes gain Treasure when they gain possession of materials and items of uncommon worth, like silver, gold and precious gems. Representing a wealth much beyond the ordinary, players may invest their Treasure when they are not actively adventuring.

Standing: A character's Standing score represents the respectability, acclaim or prestige he enjoys as a member of his community. It measures the character's ability to participate in or influence the shaping of his culture's history.

Background: Each cultural description offers six examples of backgrounds, brief descriptions offering, among other things, details of a character's past and upbringing. The choice of a background during the creation of a new hero has several consequences in gaming terms, as for example it defines a character's starting Attribute scores.

Although players new to roleplaying may adopt a background as it stands, players are encouraged to create their own characters' backstories from the ground up, using the existing ones as examples.

Company: Here every player records the names of his fellow companions, possibly indicating which role every one of them plays in the group.

Fellowship phase: The headings listed under 'Fellowship phase' are used to record the names and whereabouts of those places where the company spends time recovering from their adventuring, and the names of the individuals that occasionally help them.

Tale of Years: Players use this space to keep track of the memorable events they witness or take part in during their career as adventurers.

- Dice -

Like many games, *The One Ring* uses dice to determine whether the adventurers succeed or fail when they attempt difficult tasks or confront dangerous threats. The dice used in *The One Ring* are a set of specialised dice, sold separately in *The One Ring Dice Set*, including six 6-sided dice (also called Success dice) and one 12-sided die with two special icons (called the Feat die).

The One Ring dice set contains exactly the right amount of dice used during a game, but players may find it useful to bring some more as it will be more comfortable for each player to have a set close at hand (these additional dice may be easily customised to work as the ones that come with the game, or left as they are and used with minimum adjustments – see below).

Using your own dice

If you already have a set of regular dice you use for games, you can easily use them for *The One Ring*.

Just remember that on the 12-sided dice 'Feat' die, the 11 is the Eye of Sauron symbol and the 12 is a Gandalf rune. On the 6-sided 'Success' dice, the 6 shows also a tengwar rune.

Die Rolls

Dice aren't always necessary. Heroes are supposed to be proficient enough to complete many actions without effort. But during the course of play characters will sooner or later be confronted with difficult situations involving a

level of risk. When this happens, a hero's characteristics will be taken into account to determine their chances to succeed: this is when players 'make a roll'.

All die rolls in *The One Ring* require the Feat die, plus a number of Success dice, depending on the character's skills.

The results rolled on all dice (Feat die + a number of Success dice) are added together, and the total is compared to a Target Number (a numerical value expressing the difficulty of the action attempted). If the rolled total is equal to or higher than the TN (typically 14), the action is successful; otherwise, it has failed.

Die Rolls:

Feat Die	Result	Special
1-10	Read number normally	-
ᚹ	Success, regardless of TN	This is the highest result on the Feat die
👁	Counts as a zero	This is the lowest result on the Feat die
Success Dice	**Result**	**Special**
1-3	Read number normally	When Weary count as a 0
4-5	Read number normally	-
6ᵹ	Read number normally	On a successful roll, getting one or more 6ᵹ indicates a greater degree of success

How to read the Feat die

The Feat die is a special 12-sided die that is used every time the game requires a die roll. It has been customised to produce numerical values ranging from 1 to 10, and features two special icons: a Gandalf rune (ᚹ) and the Eye of Sauron (👁). The two icons are normally read as follows:

The ᚹ rune is considered to be the highest result obtainable on the die. When the die comes up showing the ᚹ rune, the action succeeds, whether the total result of the roll was enough to match or beat the TN set for the roll or not.

The 👁 icon is considered to be the lowest result possible on the Feat die. Under most circumstances, when the Feat die comes up showing the 👁 icon, the die counts as zero.

Both special icons are used in the game to trigger additional effects; for example, when using weapons, or the characters' unique abilities. In general terms, obtaining a Gandalf rune ᚹ in any one roll is always good, while the Eye icon 👁 can potentially be very bad.

Die Rolls for Adversaries

When the Loremaster is making a die roll to determine the outcome of an action attempted by a servant of the Shadow it can be considered more appropriate to the theme to switch the meaning of the two special icons: the 👁 icon becomes the highest result possible and yields an automatic success, while the ᚹ rune becomes the lowest result possible and produces a value of 0 (the rules on adversaries presented in **Part Seven: The Shadow** are written taking this into consideration).

How to read the Success Dice

Success dice are special 6-sided dice, customised to show the numbers 1, 2 and 3 in outline, and the numbers 4, 5 and 6 in solid black. In addition, a special icon – the tengwar numeral 1 (ᵹ) – appears along with the number 6. These dice are rolled together with the Feat die when a character has a higher chance to succeed with an action, generally thanks to high skill or special aptitude.

Conditions

The physical and spiritual state of a character may affect his performance. In *The One Ring*, player-heroes are considered to be normally hale and fit to take action, but can be made Weary or Miserable during the course of play, for example by being hurt in combat or travelling across blighted areas.

When a Weary hero makes a roll, all the Success dice that come up showing a result in an outlined number are considered to have given a result of zero (in place of the numerical value shown on the face).

When a Miserable hero makes a roll and gets an 👁 on his Feat die, he suffers a bout of madness and temporarily loses control of himself.

Skills

Most actions attempted by players during a game are affected by the abilities possessed by the acting hero. Based on the circumstances, one skill is generally judged to be more relevant than the others (**Courtesy** to impress an important personality, **Awareness** to notice the sound of approaching enemies, etc.).

On the character sheet, every skill name is followed by a string of diamond-shaped boxes, some of which have been filled with a pencil during character creation.

The number of filled boxes shows how many Success dice a player is entitled to roll along with the Feat die.

For example, Jon is making an Awareness test to see if he notices the Goblins setting up an ambush. He has an Awareness skill of ♦♦, so rolls the Feat die plus two Success dice (for his skill rating of 2), adding up the results of all the dice rolled.

If no boxes are filled, then the character simply rolls the Feat die.

For example, Dom is making the same roll but has no Awareness skill. He just rolls the Feat die.

Sometimes, a roll might involve the quality of a piece of equipment in place of a hero's level of proficiency, or his ratings in a different characteristic, such as his Valour or Wisdom score. When this is the case, the characteristic or quality rating determines the number of Success dice to roll in addition to the Feat die.

Attributes

A hero who trusts in his own potential may find the strength to overcome an obstacle that is considered almost insurmountable by less optimistic individuals. When confronted by difficult odds, players may invoke a bonus based on their Attribute ratings.

When a player fails at a roll, he may spend 1 point of Hope to receive a bonus equal to the Attribute score that is considered most pertinent for the action. Apply the favoured Attribute rating if the character is making use of a favoured skill, or the basic value otherwise.

Naturally, a player will only spend a Hope point if the modified result lets him overcome the difficulty for the action. It is only possible to spend 1 point of Hope on a single die roll (it is not possible to spend more points to get multiple bonuses).

*Robert is attempting a roll of **Athletics** against a TN of 14, but obtains a result of 10 on the dice. He invokes a Body Attribute bonus: by spending a point of Hope, he gets to add to the roll a number equal to his character's Body score. Since the hero's Body rating equals 6, the roll is boosted to a result of 16, enough to overcome the difficulty of the action and turn a failure into a success.*

Target Number

Sometimes, the outcome of an action is almost guaranteed, while in other cases the player-heroes are risking their very lives. This is reflected by the Target Number (TN), a value ranging from a minimum of 10 – an action that poses a substantial challenge only to inexperienced adventurers, to 20 or more – a challenging obstacle for all but the hardiest of heroes. In theory, a Target Number can even be as high as 30, for a task of legendary difficulty, but such extremes should be incredibly rare.

The Target Number for most actions is 14; the Loremaster may raise this number or lower it, but will explain what it is that makes the test easier or more difficult.

The table below describes the level of difficulty of a range of Target Numbers for a hale character possessing a skill rating at good level (♦♦♦):

TN	Difficulty (skill rank ♦♦♦)
10	Very Easy
12	Easy
14	**Moderate**
16	Hard
18	Severe
20	Daunting

To succeed in a roll, a player must compare his total result to the Target Number set by the Loremaster: if it is equal or greater, then the attempt is successful; otherwise, it has failed. As already explained above, obtaining a ᚹ result on the Feat die automatically makes the action attempted a success, whether the total result matched the Target Number or not.

Degree of Success

Sometimes it is useful or even necessary to determine the quality of a positive outcome. For example, the Loremaster might need to know just how far a character has jumped, how fast is he running or how convincing his speech was.

To determine the quality of a success, the player counts how many special icons ꞇ showed up on his Success dice, if any:

(-) if no ꞇ icons were scored at all, the action attempt was narrowly successful (a success);

(ꞇ) if a single ꞇ icon was scored, then the character's accomplishment was out of the ordinary (a great success);

(ꞇ ꞇ +) if two or more ꞇ icons were scored, the feat was absolutely exceptional and memorable (an extraordinary success).

The Loremaster should describe what happens when a player rolls an extraordinary success, as it could become a tale fondly recalled by the heroes.

"Eyeballing" a Die Roll Result

As players will notice, in *The One Ring* it is not always necessary to know the precise total result obtained with a die roll, but only if it was enough to match or beat the Target Number. Together with the way the degree of a success is determined, this occasionally allows players and Loremasters to 'eyeball' the results of their rolls, quickly assessing success – and degree of success – without needing to count up the results every time.

For example, Robert tests his hero's Insight ♦♦♦ against the standard TN of 14. He gets a 6 on his Feat die, and 6 ꞇ, 4 and 3 on his Success dice. As 6 plus 6 already sums up to 12, and there are still two more results to add up. Robert rapidly 'eyeballs' the result, and notes he pulled it off with a great success.

- Part Two: Creating a Hero -

- Creating a Hero -

"He had a strange feeling as the slow gurgling stream slipped by: his old life lay behind in the mists, dark adventure lay in front."

Adventurers are often simply common individuals born in exceptional times. They have most likely led an ordinary life until the day something happened and changed the way they looked at their world and the people they knew. For some reason, the place they grew up in didn't look as interesting and boundless as before, or they started to realise that they weren't doing enough for the safekeeping of their loved ones by staying at home in idleness, pretending shadows weren't growing nearer and nearer every year.

Whatever their motivation or purpose, most characters created for The One Ring are individuals who have chosen to abandon their day-to-day activities and become adventurers. They are not soldiers or captains following the commands of a lord, nor are they subtle Wizards trying to weave the threads spun by fate: they are bold souls putting themselves in peril by their own free will, sometimes simply for the love of adventure itself.

The following pages show you how to craft an adventurer drawn from one of six Heroic Cultures. Using the guidelines presented in this chapter, all players will be able to create their hero, complete with strengths and weaknesses, possessions and aspirations.

How to Create a Character

The character creation process takes a number of steps, and aims to create fictional individuals that are as close as possible to their player's wishes, and that at the same time conform to the source material.

The Loremaster should assist his players during this process, providing insight into the rules when needed, or simply to advise a player in making choices that are both true to the game's background and make for a satisfying character to play.

Focused Choices

The aim of *The One Ring* is to let players feel what it means to go adventuring in a wild and perilous land, out of a forgotten past. It is a threatening world that has more in common with the world depicted in Nordic sagas or with the Dark Ages of Europe than with our contemporary world. Players are invited to leave the age of information and fast travel behind, and adopt the point of view of individuals whose horizons often didn't extend further than a few miles from their birthplace.

For every member of the Wise and the Great, for every Wizard or Noldor or Ranger of the North, there are countless more like Samwise Gamgee, simple people who never crossed the boundaries of their own village or town, or individuals like Gimli son of Glóin, who ignored the existence of Rohan until he visited it, or Men like noble Faramir who, while learned in many lores, never encountered an Elf or a Hobbit before the War of the Ring.

The landscape revealed by this perspective is a world with uncertain boundaries, and only vague hints of distant realms and the folks who inhabit them; a place that for these very reasons offers plenty of opportunities for exploration and adventure.

The Free Folks of the North

Many of the supplements created for *The One Ring Roleplaying Game* offer its players the opportunity to create a selection of character types, based on the cultures that are most appropriate to the period covered in the volume: all characters created using this guide come from those regions of Middle-earth that Bilbo the Hobbit explored along his journey to the Lonely Mountain.

Heroic Cultures

The character creation process begins with the choice of the Culture to which the character belongs. This defines the hero's race, his most basic descriptive features, and the area of Middle-earth he comes from.

Players are asked to read the description of the Cultures found in the following pages and make some simple choices (or determine at random). All data generated during this step should be recorded on a player's character sheet in pencil.

Hero Creation Summary

Select a Heroic Culture
- Record a character's Cultural blessing and skill list
- Select two Specialities
- Roll (or choose) Background
- Record Basic Attributes and Favoured Skill
- Select two Distinctive Features

Customise your Hero
- Choose your hero's Favoured Attributes
- Spend Previous Experience to buy skill levels
- Choose a Calling and Favoured skills
- Generate the scores for Endurance and Hope
- Prioritise the scores for Valour and Wisdom (choosing, accordingly, your starting Reward or Virtue)
- Record Starting Gear and Fatigue

Customisation

Once players have chosen their character's cultural template and have accordingly compiled their character sheet, they then customise their characteristics, by making some additional choices. This step lets players define what motivated a character to become an adventurer (for example by selecting one of the five Callings) and what skills and knowledge he has picked up before the game begins.

Players should be consistent during character design, ensuring that their player-heroes are well-rounded but believable characters.

Heroic Cultures

In a world where different races coexist, the culture to which a character belongs often defines him more profoundly than simply in terms of customs and traditions. Even good and evil in the broadest term can sometimes depend on culture in Middle-earth, as evil is manifest and the various peoples collectively pledge allegiance to the Shadow, or fight against it.

All cultures presented here belong to the Free Folks of the North, brave nations that refuse the darkness and are often at open war with it.

Bardings	page 37
Beornings	page 42
Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain	page 47
Elves of Mirkwood	page 53
Hobbits of the Shire	page 60
Woodmen of Wilderland	page 67

To choose a culture, players should read through the summary description, maybe even reading some or all the background examples provided, and then choose which description is closer to the hero concept that they have in mind.

The cultural descriptions are detailed in the following pages, in the format below:

Introduction

The geographical area that is home to the Culture, some information on how they live and an overview of their history and origins.

Description

Some details that typically distinguish the appearance of the hero type.

Standard of Living

A culture's Standard of Living is a rough indication of the resources of one of its members. The game ranks the average economic status of a folk in five tiers: *Poor, Frugal, Martial, Prosperous*, and finally *Rich*. It is used to gauge the approximate economic background of a character, and his ability to make out-of-pocket expenses.

Typical Adventurers

Each culture description contains some information regarding the motivations that might push one of its members on the road to adventure (a character's calling). The text lists two 'suggested' callings, which heroes from that culture are likely to take up when they become adventurers.

In some cases, an 'unusual' calling is listed, which heroes from that culture are very unlikely to follow, certainly not without causing comment. Both are presented for guidance only: players are free to choose any calling they might find suitable to their character concept. The listed callings simply provide an example of what sorts of motivations can be considered plausible for a member of a given race.

What the King Says...

A selection of quotes concerning the cultures presented in this chapter, showing attitudes towards each of the other cultures from the point of view of an eminent member of the community.

Cultural Blessing

A special ability displayed by all player-heroes belonging to a given culture.

Starting Skill Scores

All characters belonging to a given folk receive a set of Common and Weapon skill ranks. Players should note that an underlined skill name denotes a favoured skill, while a Weapon skill name in (brackets) indicates a Cultural weapon group. All skill ratings should be recorded faithfully on the hero's character sheet.

Traits

Talents and aptitudes typically displayed by heroes from a given culture. Players add nuance to their hero's build by choosing two items from the list, and copying them under 'Traits' on the character sheet.

Backgrounds

Six example 'packages' appropriate to the culture. Each package offers a brief description of the hero's personality, or some details regarding how a hero spent his formative years, and lists the hero's starting basic Attributes, an additional favoured skill, and a number of Distinctive features (see Traits, page 92) for the player to choose from.

Players that are new to roleplaying games, or that are not particularly knowledgeable about Tolkien's world, may let the roll of a die make the decision about which background applies to their character. Hobby veterans, Middle-earth scholars or simply players who are feeling creative right away may roll or choose their background to obtain their characters' values and Traits, and then should use the given descriptions only as starting points to customise, or inspiration for inventing their own.

Common Names

Guidance on naming conventions and lists of common male and female names.

Concerning Names and Languages

Every reader of Tolkien knows how much the Professor loved languages – their structure, origins and evolution – and to what length he laboured to devise the various names native to his fictional world, or to find suitable real-world ones.

The language of most folks inhabiting Middle-earth has been given some attention, and the most important ones, like the different Elven tongues, sport a sizable vocabulary and consistent grammatical rules. Every name in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* has been carefully crafted, building upon solid linguistic foundations, and represents a precise cultural influence. The native language of every character-type presented in this chapter has been identified, and a list of personal names appropriate to each culture is provided below for players to choose from.

The different languages can provide intriguing roleplaying opportunities if the Loremaster and his players are interested. This shouldn't get in the way of the fun, however: while Tolkien used the linguistic differences among the various realms of Middle-earth to good narrative effect, he also found it simpler to avoid steep cultural barriers and gave most ethnic groups (even Orcs and other more fantastical creatures, like Ents) at least a passing knowledge of what constituted a 'lingua franca,' the so-called Common Speech, or Westron. This allows players who don't want to deal with the complex relations between the various peoples and their languages to ignore the entire subject altogether without damaging the setting. But if you are willing to explore this extremely interesting angle, it is certainly worth investigating.

Languages in the Game

In the game, all player-heroes are considered to be able to speak the Common Speech at least at an acceptable level of fluency, in addition to their own native languages. The table on the following page lists the languages spoken by the cultures presented in this chapter.

Additionally, there are several characteristics that can be used to represent knowledge of foreign or ancient tongues:

Elven-lore

An Elf hero possessing this Trait possesses some knowledge of the High-elven speech (Quenya), also known as the Ancient Tongue. At the end of the Third Age, Quenya is used in Middle-earth mostly as a ceremonial language, on inscriptions or in invocations.

Folk-lore

A character with a knowledge of Folk-lore can communicate on a basic level with most folks among the Free Peoples, knowing key words and expressions in most languages.

Trading

Characters who have often had to deal with merchants in foreign countries have generally picked up a word or two in various local languages, and can state their intentions fairly clearly, as long as they do not need to communicate overly complex or profound matters.

Adventuring Age

Players choose the starting age of their character using the information in this section as a guide. A character's age is recorded on the back of the character sheet, under 'Background'.

Heroes rarely start their adventuring career before they are deemed fully grown by their culture. On the other hand, if they progress too far into adulthood without answering the call to adventure, then they probably won't heed it at all.

Culture	Main Language	Secondary Language	Notes
Bardings	Dalish	-	*Bardings speak what can be described as a very old form of the Common Speech.*
Beornings and Woodmen	Vale of Anduin tongue	-	*The language of the folks of the Vale of Anduin is an old form of the Common Speech, closely related to Dalish.*
Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain	Dalish	Dwarvish (secret tongue)	*The Dwarves of Erebor speak the tongue of the Bardings, but preserve a knowledge of their 'secret language'.*
Elves of Mirkwood	Grey-elven (Sindarin)	Woodland Elvish	*The Silvan Elves used to speak an original Woodland tongue, but are gradually embracing the use of Sindarin.*
Hobbits of the Shire	Common Speech	-	*Hobbits have forgotten their native languages, and use the Common Tongue, preserving the use of only a few words and names of their own.*

- Bardings -

"Bard had rebuilt the town in Dale and men had gathered to him from the Lake and from South and West, and all the valley had become tilled again and rich, and the desolation was now filled with birds and blossoms in spring and fruit and feasting in autumn."

The city of Dale lay in ruins for almost two centuries, under the shadow of the Lonely Mountain. It was destroyed by the Dragon Smaug when he descended from the north to claim the vast treasure of the Dwarves of Erebor. Five years ago, the Dragon was killed and Men, led by Bard the Bowman, the Dragon-slayer, started to rebuild the city. Since then, Bard has been crowned King, and Dáin Ironfoot, the Dwarf-lord from the Iron Hills, is the new King Under the Mountain. Under their rule, Men and Dwarves have laboured hard, collaborating to rebuild Dale as they used to do before the Dragon came, and the city is approaching the glory it attained hundreds of years ago.

Bardings are descended from the same cultural group as the Beornings and the Woodmen of Wilderland. They are rapidly becoming the most powerful group of Men in Wilderland, strategically positioned as they are between the Elven kingdom of the Woodland Realm and the Dwarven Kingdom under the Mountain.

Under the guidance of the new king, the city of Dale provides the Dwarves of Erebor with everything from food and clothes to wood and ceramics, in exchange for the many products of their skillful metalworking and stonecraft. Trading with the Elves gives access to the superior quality of their woodworking.

Description

The Men of Dale are Northmen of noble origins. They are often tall and strong-limbed, with fair hair, although dark or even black hair is not unknown. Their men usually shave their beards completely unless they are very old, and cut their hair shorter than the Woodmen of Wilderland. Women let their hair grow very long, but often braid it in tight tresses. Adventurers from Dale can be easily recognised as they carry the best equipment to be found among the Men living in Wilderland.

Standard of Living

Thanks to their trade with Elves, Dwarves and far lands to the south, a Barding can choose any trade and be almost sure to thrive. Craftsmen from Dale include carpenters, cartwrights, shoemakers, tailors, tanners, weavers, not to mention those apprenticed to Dwarven weaponsmiths and masons. For these reasons, Bardings are considered a *Prosperous* folk.

Barding Adventurers

The figure of King Bard himself and the memory of his great deed inspires the most loyal among the youth of Dale to suppress their adventurous side and put their swords at the service of the city. But not everyone shares this ambition, and some dream of forgotten hoards buried in distant lands, and of exotic courts under foreign skies...

Suggested Callings: Scholar, Treasure-hunter. As Dale regains its former glory, it has become a place of learning as well as of enterprise, and the wise sometimes strike out into the world to broaden the city's knowledge. In the meantime, the stories of Smaug's great wealth have inspired many of Bard's followers to seek their own treasures abroad.

Unusual Calling: None.

What King Bard Says...

- **Bardings:**
  "Ours is a small kingdom, and a very young one; we cannot claim much more than what is encircled by the walls that protect our city. But within these walls now dwells a folk whose blood is the same of those lords of old whose banners flew in many winds. Today I accept this Crown that once was theirs, and a day will come when all Men from the North will recognise its rule, from the Running River to Redwater. And even if I won't live to see that day, my heirs will."

- **Beornings:**
  "Beorn does not welcome guests easily in his hall, but he recognises that our two folks are of one blood. A sea of darkness separated us, but after the Battle of Five

Armies, ours is a bond that neither hundreds of leagues of distance nor centuries of estrangement can sever."

- **Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain:**
  "Dáin Ironfoot is our greatest ally and most trusted friend. The fate of the Folk of the Mountain is closely tied to our own."

- **Elves of Mirkwood**:
  "The Silvan Elves are formidable warriors, and their king is strong. Unfortunately, he rarely concerns himself with anything taking place beyond the borders of his forest."

- **Hobbits of the Shire:**
  "Bilbo the Hobbit has shown us an aspect of valour that our fathers did not tell us about. I wish that more like him could find their way to our lands."

- **Woodmen of Wilderland:**
  "As hard as it can be to recognise it, we and the woodland dwellers share a common heritage. I hope that one day they will find a leader capable of demonstrating that they can join us in our destiny."

Cultural Blessing

- Stout-hearted -

"Which King?" said another with a grim voice. "As like as not it is the marauding fire of the Dragon, the only King under the Mountain we have ever known."

Living for many a year under the ever-present menace of Smaug the Dreadful has made the Bardings a courageous race. After all, there are not many creatures more fearsome than a great Dragon...

- When making a test using Valour, Barding characters can roll the Feat die twice, and keep the best result.

Starting Skill Scores

Common Skills

Copy the following skill ranks onto the character sheet and underline the favoured skill:

Awe	1	<u>Inspire</u>	2	Persuade	3
Athletics	0	Travel	2	Stealth	0
Awareness	0	Insight	2	Search	1
Explore	2	Healing	0	Hunting	0
Song	1	Courtesy	2	Riddle	0
Craft	1	Battle	2	Lore	1

Weapon Skills

Choose one of the following two Weapon skill sets, and record it on the character sheet:

1) (Swords) 2, Spear 1, Dagger 1
2) <u>Great Bow</u> 2, Spear 1, Dagger 1

Specialities

Choose two Traits from:

Boating, Old lore, Smith-craft, Swimming, Trading, Woodwright

Backgrounds

1 - By Hammer and Anvil

Your parents paid richly for a Dwarf-smith to take you as an apprentice in his forge, and you worked hard under his severe discipline, to prove that your craft could reach his people's high standards. In the long hours you spent hammering on the anvil under the close scrutiny of your master, you have learnt that it is possible to create amazing things, but it is only by putting your heart into your work that you can succeed in creating a masterpiece.

Basic Attributes: Body 5, Heart 7, Wits 2

Favoured Skill: Craft

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Adventurous, Cautious, Determined, Generous, Hardy, Merciful, Proud, Stern

2 - Wordweaver

King Bard has earned his throne by accomplishing a feat deemed unthinkable by most, setting an example to generations to come. But it is another deed that caught your interest and fired your imagination: that of the witty halfling who crossed words with Smaug the Golden in his lair. While you yourself do not expect to ever see a living Dragon, you look forward to your chance to win renown with your cunning.

Basic Attributes: Body 4, Heart 6, Wits 4

Favoured Skill: Riddle

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Adventurous, Clever, Eager, Fair-spoken, Lordly, Reckless, Tall, Trusty

3 - Gifted Senses

You grew up in Lake-town, the son of a merchant who traded goods with the Raft-elves from the woods. You often joined them to row on their crafts, proud of your strength as a youth. Under the shadow of the Dragon, your family's business struggled for survival and you dared not venture far, but since the death of Smaug, you and your brothers have started to journey to the Elvenking's forest stronghold. After many visits to those magical halls, your eyes and ears seem to notice details that escaped your attention in the past; perhaps a subtle gift from the Fair Folk.

Basic Attributes: Body 6, Heart 6, Wits 2

Favoured Skill: Search

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Adventurous, Cautious, Cunning, Fair-spoken, Patient, Steadfast, True-hearted, Wary

4 - Healing Hands

You have long served on a trading boat from Esgaroth, first leaving the Long Lake when you were very young. Once, staying for months in a distant haven to the South, waiting for a caravan from the East to arrive, you fell victim to a foreign sickness, and were succoured by a lady speaking a strange tongue. She saved your life, and taught you how to save others in time of need.

Basic Attributes: Body 4, Heart 7, Wits 3

Favoured Skill: Healing

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Adventurous, Clever, Fair, Hardy, Lordly, Proud, Reckless, Tall

5 - Dragon-eyed

Your great-grandfather witnessed the destruction of his father's house, burnt when the Dragon razed Dale. He escaped with his life, but from that day his eyes turned the colour of pale ashes. Through your grandfather and your father after him, his unrelenting gaze lives on in your ashen eyes.

Basic Attributes: Body 5, Heart 6, Wits 3

Favoured Skill: Awe

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Adventurous, Cunning, Determined, Eager, Generous, Just, Stern, Trusty

6 - A Patient Hunter

Faithful to your ancestors' heritage, your family never embraced the ways of the Lake-men, and since you were a child, you spent long days hunting on the mainland. For many years it was a dangerous trade bearing little fruit, but now the land is again blooming with every new spring, and birds and animals alike are returning to claim their old nests and lairs. Now, you will have a chance to properly hone your skills once again.

Basic Attributes: Body 5, Heart 5, Wits 4

Favoured Skill: Hunting

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Adventurous, Just, Fair, Merciful, Patient, Steadfast, True-hearted, Wary

Barding Names

A traditional Barding name is usually composed of one or two elements (for example, Dag, Day, or Lif-stan, Life Stone). Like most Northmen, Bardings often name their sons and daughters after a renowned ancestor or relative, or choose a name beginning with the same sound or sharing one element with that of the father (whose name is often given with their first name when introduced formally – for example, Lifstan son of Leiknir, or Ingrith daughter of Ingolf).

Male Names: Aegir, Agmund, Agnarr, Alfrim, Alfwald, Arn, Arnulf, Bain, Balki, Bard, Bern, Bragi, Brand, Brandulf, Dag, Domarr, Drengi, Egil, Einar, Eirik, Erland, Erling, Farald, Farmann, Farulf, Fastarr, Finn, Finnulf, Folki, Folkmarr, Galmann, Galti, Gautarr, Geirmund, Gismund, Gorm, Grimarr, Guthorm, Hafgrim, Haki, Hakon, Halfdan, Hamarr, Hedinn, Helgi, Hergrim, Hildir, Holgeir, Holti, Holvidur, Hord, Ingi, Ingolf, Ioli, Isolf, Jarl, Jarmarr, Joalf, Joar, Jofur, Jokell, Karl, Ketill, Ketilmund, Kol, Kolbeinn, Kori, Leiknir, Lifstan, Lodin, Lomund, Magni, Mord, Munan, Nari, Nefstan, Nerulf, Odd, Oddmarr, Odvarr, Olaf, Olvard, Omund, Ornolf, Ottarr, Ragnarr, Randur, Reinald, Runolf, Sandarr, Saxulf, Sigdan, Sigfast, Sigmarr, Sigvald, Sigward, Sigmund, Skarf, Skefill, Smidur, Steinarr, Thorald, Thorfast, Torwald, Ulfarr, Ulfied, Unnarr, Valbrand, Valdimarr, Vali, Vandil, Varinn, Varr.

Female Names: Aldis, Aldrif, Asfrid, Asny, Astrith, Bera, Bergdis, Brinhild, Dagmar, Dagny, Dalla, Edda, Eilif, Erna, Eydis, Estrild, Frida, Geira, Gerda, Grimhild, Gudrun, Gundrid, Gunnhild, Halla, Halldis, Halldora, Helga, Hild, Holma, Inga, Ingirun, Ingrith, Lif, Linhild, Kelda, Ragna, Runa, Saldis, Sigga, Signy, Sigrid, Sigrun, Solveig, Thora, Thordis, Thorhild, Thorleif, Ulfhild, Ulfrun, Una, Valdis, Vigdis, Walda.

Adventuring Age: 16-30
Bardings don't usually become adventurers before their 16th year of age, and rarely continue beyond their forties, when they retire to serve their family and folk.

- Beornings -

"Beorn indeed became a great chief afterwards in those regions and ruled a wide land between the mountains and the wood..."

The region along the upper portion of the river Anduin was once home to many men, but their number dwindled as the years passed. Only recently the land around the Carrock, a stony river-island, has started to see men returning to watch the Old Ford and the road to the High Pass on the Misty Mountains. Though few in numbers, they rapidly demonstrated to trespassers that only those who are welcomed by Beorn the skin-changer can hope to cross the Great River with their lives. And Beorn does not welcome anybody with ease...

When Beorn broke his isolation, he became a leader of men. His legendary ferocity attracted mountain-hunters and fighters without allegiance, warriors who lost their families or who forsook their clans due to their violent tempers, and needful souls drawn to his protective nature.

In time, all kinds of individuals flocked to his side, giving rise to the Beornings.

Faithful to the teachings and will of their chieftain, they protect the mountain passes and the road that leaves the forest to cross the river Anduin, watching for every creature, on two legs or four, that dares defy them. Men, Elves and Dwarves still have to earn the trust of this suspicious folk, and often must pay heavy tolls for safe passage across the Beornings' domain.

Description

Beornings are rugged men with brawny arms and legs, and lively women with undaunted eyes. Their spirit is reflected in their appearance: the women have long, wild hair and the men unkempt beards. Born free, they pay no tribute nor bow to any crown, keeping at peace the strip of land they have chosen as their own. All foes of the Beornings are mortal foes, but friends who prove to be trustworthy are friends for life.

Standard of Living

The Beornings sustain themselves by breeding cattle and horses and keeping hives of great bees. Recently, Beorn is considering requesting a safe-passage toll from all travellers crossing their lands. For the moment, though, the Beorning culture ranks as *Martial*.

Beorning Adventurers

Beorn and his chieftains cannot really oppose the many young warriors who express their desire to leave their land to explore. Many Beornings are naturally adventurous people who like to see things with their own eyes. Moreover, their tendency to be bluff and direct guarantees a never-ending supply of enemies. Whatever the reason for their leaving, every Beorning is expected to return home at least once a year, at Yule-tide, to feast at Beorn's bidding.

Suggested Callings: Slayer, Warden. Beornings make enemies readily, and many is the slaughtered man's son who goes seeking vengeance. Other Beornings are more inspired by their chieftain's fiercely protective demeanour.

Unusual Calling: Treasure-hunter. Mere gold is of little interest to the men of the Carrock, who are more likely to be swayed by glory or adventure.

What Beorn Says...

- **Bardings:**
  "They are a good folk, the Bardings, but all that gold makes them lazy. I would grow hungry waiting for a Barding to hunt for my food!"

- **Beornings:**
  "If you choose to follow me, know that I don't ask for your obedience, nor do I need your support. All I wish of you is to be as vigilant, as relentless and fiercely determined as you have been all your life, living here close to the edge of Mirkwood. I only ask that you remain true to yourselves."

- **Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain:**
  "Dwarves are a strange race. Some say they are cut from the living rock. Their heads are certainly hard enough..."

- **Elves of Mirkwood:**
  "The Elvenking has a weakness for silver and white gems, and other useless trinkets. It would be funny if it wasn't dangerous!"

- **Hobbits of the Shire:**
  "Stout-hearted folk! Although they should be, with the amount they eat!"

- **Woodmen of Wilderland:**
  "You think that they hide behind their stockades, and the cloak of a Wizard. Fools! Radagast showed me a trick or two in his time, and he has certainly done the same with the Woodmen. You should know that sometimes appearances are misleading..."

Cultural Blessing

– Furious –

Swiftly he returned and his wrath was redoubled...

Beornings fight like cornered animals: when they see their own blood they are filled with a red wrath.

- During combat, a Wounded Beorning ignores the effects of being Weary (whether he was injured during the same fight or not).

Starting Skill Scores

Common Skills

Copy the following skill ranks onto the character sheet and underline the favoured skill:

Awe	3	Inspire	1	Persuade	0
Athletics	2	Travel	0	Stealth	0
Awareness	2	Insight	3	Search	1
Explore	0	Healing	1	Hunting	3
Song	0	Courtesy	0	Riddle	1
Craft	1	Battle	0	Lore	0

Weapon Skills

Choose one of the following two Weapon skill sets, and record it on the character sheet:

1) (Axes) 2, Spear 1, Dagger 1
2) Great spear 2, Axe 1, Dagger 1

Specialities

Choose two Traits from:

Anduin-lore, Beast-lore, Cooking, Fishing, Mountaineer, Story-telling

Backgrounds

1 - Child of Two Folks

Many years ago, your father came down from the mountains and took as his wife a woman from the tribes of Mirkwood. You grew up among two worlds, seen as a stranger by both folks. For many years, you encountered suspicion and mistrust, and many scoffed at the colour of your eyes and hair. But you endured and were finally able to take what your heart deemed good from both your mother's and your father's kin.

Basic Attributes: Body 6, Heart 6, Wits 2

Favoured Skill: Insight

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Bold, Fierce, Grim, Gruff, Hardened, Proud, Tall, Wilful

2 - Errand-rider

Since the time your family joined Beorn's folk you have been a runner, a messenger carrying news for your folk. In your hide shoes, you have countless times trodden the path that goes from the High Pass to the Old Ford, always welcomed by chieftains and families eager to hear your tidings. At times you have brought joy and merriment with news of victory, but also woe and distress with tales of war and defeat.

Basic Attributes: Body 7, Heart 5, Wits 2

Favoured Skill: Inspire

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Determined, Energetic, Forthright, Grim, Hardened, Robust, Swift, Trusty

3 - Head of the Family

Beorn, the great chieftain of your folk, sent your father to watch the mountain passes for the best part of the year, leaving you to provide for your family. Whenever the pursuit of an animal's trail led you westward towards the mountains, your heart leapt in anticipation of the day your father would be back, with new stories to tell and fresh scars to testify to their truthfulness.

Basic Attributes: Body 6, Heart 4, Wits 4

Favoured Skill: Awareness

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Curious, Determined, Generous, Grim, Hardy, Steadfast, Trusty, Wilful

4 - Light-foot

They say that when your father was on the look-out, he could hide even from the sight of the Great Eagles. From him you learnt that there is no dishonour in stealth, whether it is your task to spy upon your enemies or when you are keeping watch over a village of your folk. You have listened to your father's advice and observed his crafty movements, trying to discover and learn his tricks.

Basic Attributes: Body 5, Heart 5, Wits 4

Favoured Skill: Stealth

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Bold, Curious, Energetic, Forthright, Grim, Reckless, Suspicious, Swift

5 - Keeper of Tales

According to the old men of your folk, when your grandfather died he was more than one hundred years old. He was a hardy warrior, but you remember him best

wrapped in his white wolf-skin, recounting tales about the bygone days of his youth. He could use words as precious as fine diamonds or as loud as clashing iron as he spoke of battles won and lost, of kings forgotten and buried, and of a threatening Shadow so old its age could not be counted in men's lives. You treasure his tales as an invaluable inheritance.

Basic Attributes: Body 6, Heart 5, Wits 3

Favoured Skill: Lore

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Fierce, Grim, Gruff, Hardy, Reckless, Suspicious, Vengeful, Wrathful

6 - Voice from the Past

The elders and ancient warriors of your tribe spend the long evening hours talking in front of the hearth, on the stepped dais of the main hall. To the young and restless, their soft speaking may seem idle talk, but you loved to listen to their wise words as they exchanged tales and songs, as old as the intricate images wound around the wooden pillars of the hall. One day you might well end up adding your own words to the songs of your folk, strengthening the bonds of tradition.

Basic Attributes: Body 7, Heart 4, Wits 3

Favoured Skill: Song

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Generous, Grim, Proud, Robust, Steadfast, Tall, Vengeful, Wrathful

Beorning Names

The Northmen inhabiting the Vales of the Anduin River speak the same language and share a common vocabulary of personal names. The Beornings and the Woodmen favour different names, but they are set apart especially by their peculiar use of bynames and nicknames. The Beornings are gradually embracing the custom of choosing for themselves names honouring their renowned chieftain, either by having a B as the first letter or containing the word for Bear (for example, Balderic, Beranald, Beormud, and so on). They further individualise their names by adding a byname, referring to their provenances or occupations, or physical or temperamental qualities (Arnulf the Old, Berangar the Eloquent). Bynames are often bestowed by an event, especially if connected to a special feat of skill or deed of renown.

Male Names: Adalard, Ageric, Agilfrid, Agiulf, Alaric, Alberic, Amalric, Amand, Andagis, Atalaric, Atanagild, Ansegisel, Ansovald, Aregisel, Arnulf, Audovald, Avagis, Badegisel, Baldac, Balderic, Barald, Beorn, Beran, Beranald, Berangar, Bertefried, Beormud, Cilderic, Eberulf, Eboric, Ebregisel, Ebrimuth, Ediulf, Ermanaric, Euric, Eutaric, Evermud, Evoric, Frideger, Gararic, Garivald, Geberic, Gisalric, Gerold, Grimald, Grimbald, Grimbeorn, Grimfast, Gundovald, Hartgard, Hartmut, Hartnid, Hathus, Heriwulf, Hildebald, Imnachar, Ingelram, Ingund, Iwald, Iwgar, Leudast, Magneric, Malaric, Maracar, Merovech, Munderic, Odo, Odovacar, Otbert, Ragnacar, Ramnulf, Rathar, Reginar, Ricfried, Rigunth, Roderic, Sigeric, Sigibert, Sunnegisil, Theodard, Theodebert, Theodemir, Theodwin, Theudebald, Theuderic, Thorismund, Walcaud, Waleran,Widuven, Willicar, Wulferd.

Female Names: Adosinda, Amalfrida, Amalina, Avagisa, Avina, Beranhild, Brunihild, Gailavira, Garsendis, Geleswinta, Gelvira, Grimhild, Hermesind, Heva, Hilduara, Radegund.

Beorning Bynames: ...from or of a specific place (*Baldac from the High Pass, Beran of the Mountains*), the Bald, the Black, the Bold, the Captain, the Cloaked, the Crooked, the Eloquent, the Foresighted, the Good, the Good-sword, the Loyal, the Old, the Pugnacious, the Quick-witted, the Quiet, the Red, of the Red-shield, the Rich, the Runner, the Sad, the Sharp, the Smith, the Thin, the Trouble-maker, the Wise, the Young.

Adventuring Age: 16-30
Beornings don't usually become adventurers before their 16th year of age, and rarely continue beyond their forties, when they retire to serve their family and folk.

- Dwarves -
of the Lonely Mountain

"There now Dáin son of Nain took up his abode, and he became King under the Mountain, and in time many other Dwarves gathered to his throne in the ancient halls."

When the Dwarves first settled on Erebor, the Lonely Mountain, they dug deep and far, carving a kingdom of stone and jewels beneath its slopes. Lamps and candles burned ceaselessly to illuminate their busy hands, and their treasure grew along with their fame in the Northern world. One day, the Dragon came on the wings of greed; Smaug the Golden burnt the Kingdom under the Mountain to ashes, smashing its pride with a lash of its tail. But Dwarves can hold a grudge that outlasts a Dragon's life, and at the end of an incredible adventure, Thorin Oakenshield and thirteen fellow conspirators lived to see the death of Smaug. Today, the halls of the Dwarves resound again with the din of hammer and anvil, and their masons craft the roads and buildings of Dale and Erebor with stones of many colours. The Men of Dale, now also called 'Bardings' in honour of their lord, the Dragon-slayer, provide the busy Dwarves with everything they need to sustain themselves, in exchange of the fruits of their exceptional stone and metalworking.

Since the killing of the Dragon, the Dwarves have ceased to be a wandering folk of exiles, and have undertaken great labours to restore the Kingdom under the Mountain.

Its wealth and renown are rapidly growing, and seem destined to grow greater than before: new halls are dug, cavernous streets under the earth are adorned with pillars as numerous as trees in a forest, while superior armour and keen swords leave their smiths' workshops in ever greater number. More Dwarves arrive every year from distant lands and join King Dáin's underground court.

Description

Dwarves are an ancient and secretive race, whose customs and traditions are mostly unknown to outsiders. At the end of the Third Age, they are a proud but dwindling people, survivors from a distant past. Almost all Dwarves that can be encountered speak of themselves as belonging to 'Durin's folk'. They are probably the most redoubtable warriors in Middle-earth, hard to break or corrupt, but often at odds with other Free Peoples over old quarrels or new slights.

Dwarves are short and stocky, with robust limbs and heads crowned with long hair and longer beards that give them their typically elderly appearance. They are long-lived, known to reach 250 years of age.

Standard of Living

With the fabulous Dragon-hoard of Erebor reclaimed and their Kingdom restored, the Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain rank as a *Rich* culture.

Dwarven Adventurers

To most denizens of the Lonely Mountain, taking part in the making of future splendours is enough to fill their life with purpose. To some, the memory of even greater halls still lost to the enemy fills their heart with longing and bitterness, driving out any interest in the concerns of other folks. These restless spirits become emissaries and adventurers, and their wandering carries the name of Erebor to many foreign realms.

Suggested Callings: Slayer, Treasure-hunter. Few have been as wronged as the Dwarves of Erebor, who now strive to rid the world of the Shadow. Many, though, seek only to reclaim the lost marvels of Durin's folk.

Unusual Calling: Warden. As mindful as they are of their own settlements, the Dwarves rarely concern themselves with the well-being of outsiders.

What King Dáin Says...

- **Bardings:**
  "If it wasn't for Bard the Bowman, there would be no King under the Mountain. We will always do whatever is in our power to help him and his people."

- **Beornings:**
  "Beorn is unfortunately not overly fond of Dwarves, and his followers appear, if anything, to be of a grimmer sort than him! Nonetheless, they have our trust, as they hate Orcs and Wargs as much as we do."

- **Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain:**
  "Since the day of the Awakening, we have delved deep, travelled far, and toiled hard. The fruits of the labour of our ancestors have outlasted the lives of their makers, to the enrichment of their descendants. In these halls of stone, we will endure any storm, and here our kin will find refuge in this and the next age of the world."

- **Elves of Mirkwood:**
  "Once we fought together in battle and prevailed. But these days the emissaries of the Elvenking never say either yea nor nay, and their fair words cannot conceal his reluctance to ever leave his halls again."

- **Hobbits of the Shire:**
  "If there is something I learnt about Hobbits, it is that there is much more about them than anyone expects."

- **Woodmen of Wilderland:**
  "I hear they are skillful hunters and trackers, and that's all. We are not concerned with their ways."

Cultural Blessing

– Redoubtable –

Dwarves too can go swiftly, and they do not tire sooner than Orcs.

The legendary stubbornness of Dwarves lets them endure burdens that would break the back of the sturdiest of Men.

- Dwarf characters calculate their starting Fatigue threshold by adding up the Encumbrance ratings of all the items they are carrying, and then subtracting their favoured Heart score from the total.

Starting Skill Scores

Common Skills

Copy the following skill ranks onto the character sheet and underline the favoured skill:

Awe	0	Inspire	2	Persuade	0
Athletics	0	Travel	3	Stealth	0
Awareness	0	Insight	0	Search	3
Explore	2	Healing	0	Hunting	0
Song	1	Courtesy	0	Riddle	2
Craft	3	Battle	1	Lore	0

Weapon Skills

Choose one of the following two Weapon skill sets, and record it on the character sheet:

1) (Axes) 2, Short Sword 1, Dagger 1

2) Mattock 2, Short Sword 1, Dagger 1

Specialities

Choose two Traits from:

Fire-making, Smith-craft, Smoking, Stone-craft, Trading, Tunnelling

Backgrounds

1 – A Life of Toil

You and your family have laboured hard in the mines of the Iron Hills, dreaming that one day you will be able to delve deeper once again for far more precious ore. Unfortunately, to this day most ancient Dwarf-holds are no more than Dragon's lairs or Orc-infested pits. You toil patiently, peering into the gloom with eyes hungry for the gleaming of gems and gold.

Basic Attributes: Body 6, Heart 2, Wits 6

Favoured Skill: Explore

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Energetic, Fierce, Hardened, Proud, Stern, Vengeful, Wary, Wilful

2 - Far Trader

By the reckoning of the Dwarves, you were only a stripling when you left your home in the Blue Mountains to follow your kinsmen along the trading roads. You have since seen many places and met different folks eager to trade goods for the product of Dwarven handiwork. You remember little of the roads you took, as you were led by your more experienced kin, but those journeys have awoken in you a desire to see the world.

Basic Attributes: Body 7, Heart 2, Wits 5

Favoured Skill: Courtesy

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Cautious, Cunning, Eager, Hardy, Honourable, Secretive, Steadfast, Wilful

3 - Bitter Exile

Long ago, your ancestors were driven out of their underground halls in the far North. Since you were born, you have assisted your ailing father as he suffered from his enforced exile. His malady proved infectious, and over the long years, your longing for the lost home of your forefathers consumed you day after day. You tried to quench your spite in forgetfulness, but the embers of your anger never died completely.

Basic Attributes: Body 7, Heart 3, Wits 4

Favoured Skill: Healing

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Fierce, Gruff, Hardened, Robust, Secretive, Stern, Wilful, Wrathful

4 - Eloquent Orator

The hardships endured by your folk during two ages of the world have inspired many songs. But the words that come easier to your lips are those recounting deeds of courage and valour or, even better, those exalting the craft of your forefathers in works of cunning and skill. Your tales are testimony that your people has suffered much, but can still see beauty in the Northern World.

Basic Attributes: Body 5, Heart 4, Wits 5

Favoured Skill: Persuade

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Cautious, Determined, Energetic, Honourable, Proud, Steadfast, Wary, Wilful

5 - A Lesson in Revenge

Your grandfather never relented in his hunt for the Orc-chief from Mount Gundabad who killed his wife. Leading you along dim underground passages, he told you much about the cruel ways of the servants of the Shadow, and how to fight them. His words scared you when you were young and haunted your dreams, but now that you have started down the road to adventure you begin to see the value of his advice.

Basic Attributes: Body 6, Heart 3, Wits 5

Favoured Skill: Battle

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Bold, Cunning, Determined, Hardy, Lordly, Suspicious, Vengeful, Wilful

6 - A Penetrating Gaze

Your elder brother instructed you to judge others by their deeds, not their words, especially when dealing with the fair-spoken Elves. But in time you have come to trust your instinct above all else, as your heart is not easily swayed. Thieves and liars do not dare to meet your eyes, as you seem able to lay bare their plots.

Basic Attributes: Body 6, Heart 4, Wits 4

Favoured Skill: Insight

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Bold, Eager, Gruff, Lordly, Robust, Suspicious, Wilful, Wrathful

Lonely Mountain Dwarf Names

All Dwarves of Durin's Folk receive a true name at birth that they do not reveal to members of other races. In their dealings with other people, they adopt personal names in the language of other friendly cultures. The Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain are no exception, and commonly use names after the fashion of the Men of the North. This custom has been in use for so long that a number of names have become traditionally associated with Dwarves, and are used almost exclusively by them. Dwarves of renown are sometimes given a byname, usually an honorific title celebrating an exceptional deed or distinctive quality (for example, Thorin Oakenshield or Dáin Ironfoot).

Male Names: Ai, Anar, Balin, Beli, Bifur, Bláin, Bofur, Bombur, Borin, Burin, Bruni, Dáin, Dori, Durin, Dwalin, Farin, Fíli, Flói, Frár, Frerin, Frór, Fundin, Gimli, Ginar, Glóin, Gróin, Grór, Hanar, Hepti, Iari, Kíli, Lófar, Lóni, Náin, Náli, Nár, Narvi, Niping, Nói, Nori, Núr, Nýrád, Óin, Ónar, Óri, Póri, Regin, Svior, Thorin, Thráin, Thrór, Veig, Vidar.

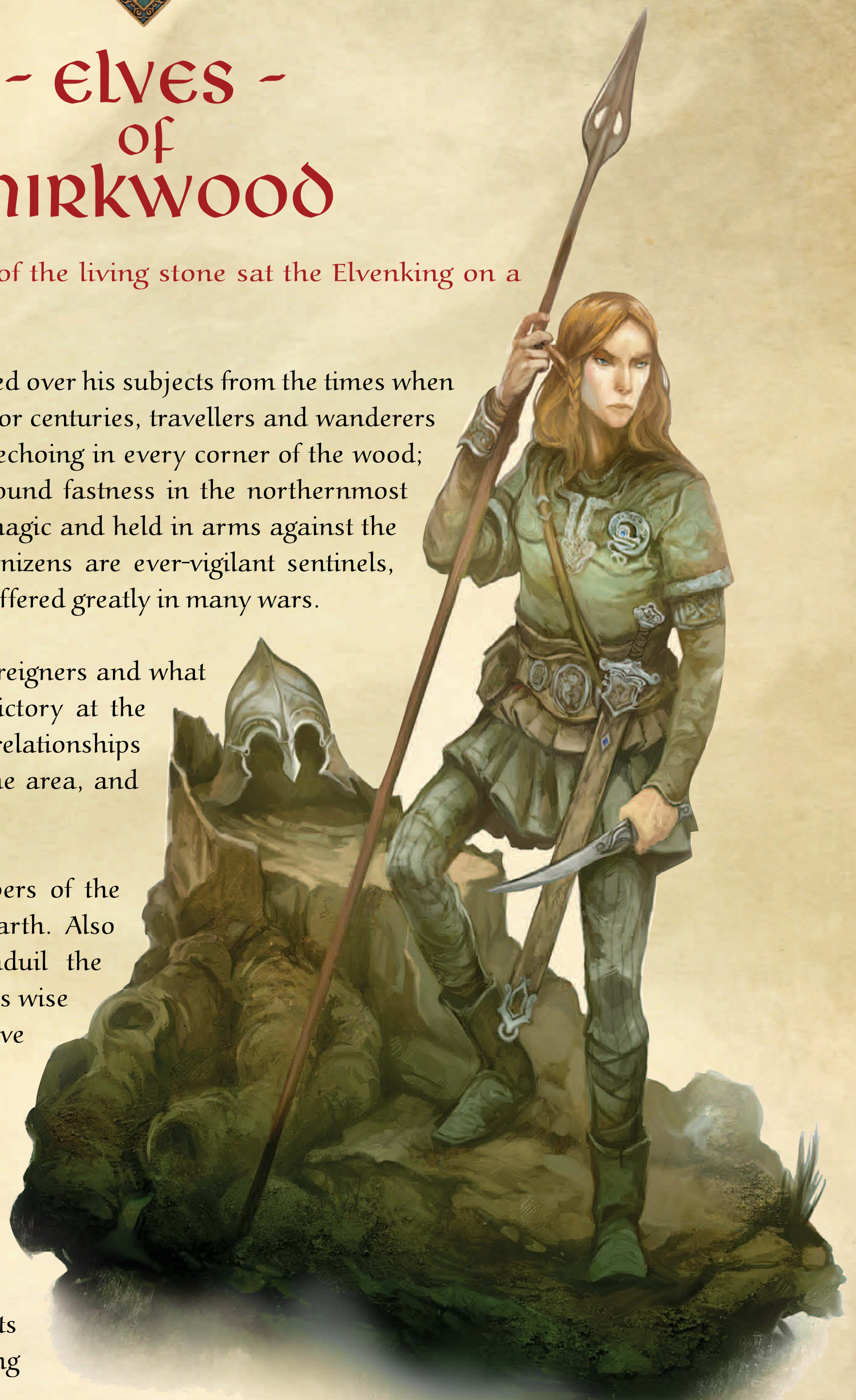
Female Names: Dís, Hón, Kóna, Már.

Adventuring Age: 50-100

Dwarves generally start their life on the road in their fifties, and do not usually consider retiring before their nineties. Around that time, they feel they can no longer stay away from their family, or want to dedicate themselves solely to the perfection of their crafts. But Dwarves can remain active until they are more than two hundred years old, and may return to adventuring if a great need arises, like the opportunity to avenge an old insult or injury, or to recover a treasure or reclaim a long-lost dwarf-hold.

- Elves - of Mirkwood

"In a great hall with pillars hewn out of the living stone sat the Elvenking on a chair of carven wood."



The Elvenking of the Woodland Realm has ruled over his subjects from the times when Mirkwood was called Greenwood the Great. For centuries, travellers and wanderers have heard the eerie sound of their laughter echoing in every corner of the wood; today, the court of Thranduil is an underground fastness in the northernmost region of Mirkwood, a bastion protected by magic and held in arms against the Shadow that has fallen on the forest. Its denizens are ever-vigilant sentinels, members of a diminishing people that have suffered greatly in many wars.

They have grown suspicious of trespassing foreigners and what they may bring. Now, however, the great victory at the Battle of Five Armies has somewhat eased the relationships between Elves, Dwarves and Men living in the area, and trade has increased after years of seclusion.

The Elves of Northern Mirkwood are members of the Firstborn, the earliest denizens of Middle-earth. Also called Wood-elves, the followers of Thranduil the Elvenking are a reclusive folk. They may be less wise or ambitious than nobler Elves, but they have chosen to live a simpler life.

Their attachment to all things natural lets them rejoice in leading hunts and holding feasts, even under the threat of what lurks in the dark of Mirkwood. It is this love for Middle-earth and their hopes of reclaiming the entire forest from the Shadow that prevents them from abandoning their home and sailing to the uttermost West.

Description

Elusive warriors devoted to the preservation of their hidden realm, Silvan Elves are a fair but hardy folk. Their experiences have made them suspicious of other peoples, but have not robbed them of the ability to delight in the simple pleasures of living. Even though their power is slowly waning, Elves are staunch fighters dedicated to resisting the encroaching darkness, either alone or side-by-side with trusted allies. As all those who belong to the Firstborn, they are not subject to illness or old age, and thus can dwell within the circles of the world until they choose to leave it, or are slain.

Standard of Living

The Elves of Mirkwood are a folk at a war, and dedicate much of their wealth to their defence, ranking their culture as *Martial*.

Wood-elf Adventurers

Silvan Elves are not often seen outside of their woodland kingdom. In their attempt to preserve its beauty, they turned the forest's shadowy canopy and its green glades into a fortified sanctuary, where they struggle to hold the Shadow at bay. When an Elven adventurer leaves his home, he risks being considered just short of an outlaw: to many of his peers and family, he is forsaking his duties.

Suggested Calling: Scholar, Warden. Although rustic by Elven standards, Silvan Elves are old and wise by the reckoning of Men, and often seek to learn more about the world. Others, having dedicated their lives to fighting the servants of the Shadow in Mirkwood, strike out to protect those who suffer at its hands abroad.

Unusual Calling: Wanderer. Devoted to their homeland in the great Wood as they are, Wood-elves may leave their home for many reasons, but rarely out of simple restlessness.

What the Elvenking Says...

- **Bardings:**
  "I have seen the downfall of many mortal kings. Bard seems of a wiser kind than most of them, but what about his subjects?"

- **Beornings:**
  "Beorn has gathered around him an unruly lot, wild and unrestrained. At least they keep a good watch over our western borders."

- **Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain:**
  "They are doughty warriors, but they are as stubborn and haughty in times of peace as they are fierce in battle."

- **Elves of Mirkwood:**
  "The times we live in force us to hide deeper and deeper inside this living maze of trees and shadow. We know its intricate paths as if they were the twisting corridors of our underground palace, but we are making it always more difficult for others to follow."

- **Hobbits of the Shire:**
  "They seem a merry and resourceful people. Let us hope that their spirit won't be darkened now that they have seen the world outside their borders."

- **Woodmen of Wilderland:**
  "The Men of the Woods share our love for the great forest, and have seen the same Shadow that we first faced long ago and still haunts our thoughts."

Cultural Blessing

– Folk of the Dusk –

...the Wood-elves lingered in the twilight of our Sun and Moon but loved best the stars; and they wandered in the great forests that grew tall in lands that are now lost.

While fond of the Sun, the Elves of Mirkwood find themselves at greater ease under moonlight or starlight, or among the shadows of a forest; their senses are keener, their motions exceedingly sure and graceful.

- When an Elf of Mirkwood is inside a forest or under the earth, or it is night, his Attribute bonuses are based on his favoured rating for all rolls involving the use of a Common skill.

Starting Skill Scores

Common Skills

Copy the following skill ranks onto the character sheet and underline the favoured skill:

Awe	2	Inspire	0	Persuade	0
Athletics	3	Travel	0	Stealth	2
<u>Awareness</u>	2	Insight	0	Search	0
Explore	0	Healing	1	Hunting	1
Song	2	Courtesy	0	Riddle	0
Craft	0	Battle	2	Lore	3

Weapon Skills

Choose one of the following two Weapon skill sets, and record it on the character sheet:

1) (Spears) 2, Sword 1, Dagger 1
2) <u>Bow</u> 2, and Sword 1, Dagger 1

Specialities

Choose two Traits from:

Boating, Elven-lore, Fire-making, Mirkwood-lore, Swimming, Woodwright

Backgrounds

1 - New Hope

You have lived among the Raft-elves, often dealing with the Men of Lake-town on behalf of King Thranduil. At first, it was only your sire's command that made you leave your forest home, but now you have no regrets. The world beyond the King's realm is wide and, while full of hidden threats, is also populated by other valiant peoples, enemies of the same Shadow that your kin has fought for centuries. It could well be your mission to find worthy and trusted allies to join you in your fight...

Basic Attributes: Body 5, Heart 2, Wits 7

Favoured Skill: Travel

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Clever, Determined, Merry, Patient, Quick of Hearing, Swift, Wary, Wilful

2 - A Musical Legacy

Your father was a minstrel of great virtue, whose work will be praised for countless years. His talent passed along to you, but transformed into a love for the music that lies in plain speech. Your voice is pleasing to all listeners, and you choose your words much as your fingers choose the strings on the harp.

Basic Attributes: Body 5, Heart 4, Wits 5

Favoured Skill: Courtesy

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Cautious, Cunning, Elusive, Fair-spoken, Merciful, Proud, Quick of Hearing, Secretive

3 - Memory of Suffering

A long time ago, Elves akin to your folk dwelt around the Naked Hill in the south of Greenwood the Great, before the Necromancer claimed it to build his fastness of sorcery. Now that the Shadow has fled, you have often journeyed there to spy upon that dreaded place, to ponder on the hurt suffered by your people in many years of cruel warfare. Many of your kinsmen prefer to forget and be merry, but you know that evil is seldom conquered forever.

Basic Attributes: Body 5, Heart 3, Wits 6

Favoured Skill: Stealth

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Determined, Elusive, Hardened, Keen-eyed, Patient, Quick of Hearing, Suspicious, Wary

4 - Noble Blood

In your veins runs the blood of Elven adventurers of great renown, who in ages past chose to dwell among the Silvan Elves, seeking refuge and peace in troubled years. They say their superior wisdom is reflected in your noble countenance, and much is expected of you in the coming wars. You have sworn never to betray these expectations, and you will die before you see your fair home reduced to ruins.

Basic Attributes: Body 4, Heart 4, Wits 6

Favoured Skill: Inspire

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Fair, Honourable, Lordly, Proud, Quick of Hearing, Suspicious, Swift, Wilful

5 - Wild at Heart

The beauty of Greenwood the Great seems lost forever in the shadows of Mirkwood, but you still find solace running alongside its wild beasts, as your kinsmen did for centuries. The wood sings to you as tree branches sway and leaves rustle; enchanting music you strive to decipher. Some find your ways to be simple and rustic, but they fail to see the wisdom of choosing to live your life fully in these waning years.

Basic Attributes: Body 4, Heart 3, Wits 7

Favoured Skill: Athletics

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Cautious, Clever, Fair, Honourable, Keen-eyed, Merry, Nimble, Quick of Hearing

6 - Envoy of the King

You have journeyed far from the borders of the Woodland Realm with your father, on his errands to the courts of Men and Dwarves. Standing by his side, you have learnt much in a handful of months; more than in years spent in the gilded cage of your home. Sadly, you have also discovered how the Shadow is creeping upon the outside world, gaining in strength with each passing year.

Basic Attributes: Body 6, Heart 2, Wits 6

Favoured Skill: Lore

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Cunning, Fair-spoken, Hardened, Lordly, Merciful, Nimble, Quick of Hearing, Secretive

Mirkwood Elf Names

For the most part, the Wood-elves bear names fashioned in the Grey-elven language.

Male Names: Aerandir, Amras, Amroth, Aredhel, Caranthir, Denethor, Edrahil, Elladan, Erestor, Galdor, Galion, Guilin, Haldir, Legolas, Lindir, Orophin, Oropher, Thranduil.

Female Names: Finduilas, Míriel, Nimrodel.

Adventuring Age: 100-500
Elves are invulnerable to age, and may become adventurers at any time after they reach adulthood (at about a century of age). Considering the level of ability of a starting hero, players should avoid choosing an excessively venerable age for their character – heroes older than 300 years old should definitely possess the Elven Lore speciality, to reflect their deeper knowledge of the past.

- Hobbits of the Shire -

"Hobbits are an unobtrusive but very ancient people, more numerous formerly than they are today; for they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favourite haunt."

The Shire, a pleasant corner in the Quiet of the World, has stood safe and peaceful for many years. Its inhabitants, a little people called Hobbits, possess a love for solid traditions and respectable ways, and a strong dislike for anything out of the ordinary. If Hobbits had their way, the days would go by in an unchanging world, as they have since anyone can remember. But even if most Hobbits pretend not to heed it, there are dark things moving beyond the borders of the Shire; and while someone has long been taking care that no shadow interrupts their well-ordered lives, these shadows are lengthening.

Since Mr. Bilbo Baggins' astonishing adventure with a group of Dwarves and a travelling Wizard, all kinds of stories concerning remote lands, dark woods, Giants, Elves, and dark halls beneath the earth have started to circulate among Hobbits of the more adventurous sort.

Now, certainly not everyone believes that Mr Baggins really left his comfortable hole at Bag End to go anywhere, but some actually do, and every year another lad or lass leaves home to go adventuring. Gandalf, the conjuror, has often been blamed for such incidents, and the sight of his pointy hat is sure to ruin the day of all respectable Hobbits.

Description

Hobbits are much smaller than Men, even smaller than Dwarves, and are often mistaken for children by Men who see them. Such likeness may be explained through a long-forgotten common ancestry, which would also explain why Hobbits often like or dislike the same things as Men do. A merry folk, Hobbits are good-natured individuals. When pushed to resort to weapons, they choose small swords and short hunting bows, which they can shoot with uncanny precision when needs be.

Standard of Living

Hobbits live in peace and relative prosperity. Their land is rich and their borders protected. They seldom trade with other folk, with the occasional exception of travelling Dwarves. Their culture's economy ranks as *Prosperous*.

Hobbit Adventurers

The peaceful inhabitants of The Shire like to stay well away from adventures, unless driven by their dangerous curiosity. When a Hobbit commits the unthinkable social offence of going on an adventure, he is sure to lose his good name; he starts to be attributed all sort of oddities, and ends up quickly with a reputation for a 'queer' or 'mad' character. Much more grounded in good sense than their quieter fellows credit them with, Hobbits on the road do not forget that a small pleasure can work wonders on a weary traveller, and make sure to bring with them some source of gratification, be it a supply of pipe-weed, a set of favoured cooking tools, or simply a small token that reminds them of home.

Suggested Callings: Treasure-hunter, Wanderer. More than anything, the little folk of the Shire may be driven from their comfortable lives by curiosity. Most Hobbit adventurers wish only to find interesting things or visit exotic places.

Unusual Calling: Slayer. Hobbits are a sensible, level-headed sort, and unlikely to be vengeful. Besides, little in the way of misfortune ever befalls their quiet home.

What Bilbo Says...

- **Bardings:**
  "King Bard is a generous young man, with many eager followers of like mind. Hobbits will always be welcome in his kingdom."

- **Beornings:**
  "My Dwarven friends have written me all sorts of frightful stories about these Beornings, but since

Beorn chose them I am sure that in heart they are just as good as their leader."

- **Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain:**
  "We Hobbits cannot count on friends as good and trusty as the Dwarves, these days."

- **Elves of Mirkwood:**
  "The Silvan Elves of Mirkwood are and remain Elves, despite their suspicions and secret ways, and so are Good People."

- **Hobbits of the Shire:**
  "We and the Big Folk are as different as peas and apples, not to mention Elves, or even Dwarves! That's why I say that we Hobbits must stick together."

- **Woodmen of Wilderland:**
  "Gandalf says that the language spoken by these Woodmen share many words with our own. What we certainly have in common is the friendship of Wizards! Do they know about pipe-weed, I wonder...?"

Cultural Blessing

- Hobbit-sense -

... they have a fund of wisdom and wise sayings that men have mostly never heard or have forgotten long ago.

Hobbits possess a cheerful spirit and a friendliness that makes them good companions. Additionally, they have learned their place in the world a long time ago, and a deep-rooted sense of proportion has found its place in their hearts. No visions or wild fantasies can tempt them, as they do not seek power or control over others.

- Each Hobbit character in the group increases the company's Fellowship rating by one point. Additionally, when making a Wisdom roll, Hobbits can roll the Feat die twice, and keep the best result.

Starting Skill Scores

Common Skills

Copy the following skill ranks onto the character sheet and underline the favoured skill:

Awe	0	Inspire	0	Persuade	2
Athletics	0	Travel	1	<u>Stealth</u>	3
Awareness	2	Insight	1	Search	2
Explore	0	Healing	0	Hunting	0
Song	2	Courtesy	3	Riddle	2
Craft	0	Battle	0	Lore	0

Weapon Skills

Choose one of the following two Weapon skill sets, and record it on the character sheet:

1) <u>Short Sword</u> 2, Bow 1, Dagger 1
2) <u>Bow</u> 2, Short Sword 1, Dagger 1

Specialities

Choose two Traits from:

Cooking, Gardener, Herb-lore, Smoking, Story-telling, Tunnelling

Backgrounds

1 - Restless Farmer

You were born into a family of farmers in the Southfarthing, where the best pipe-weed grows. To satisfy your curiosity – and your father's expectations – you started to work at a very early age, learning a lot from farmhands and traders. From time to time, you feel your closeness to the earth move you, awakening a desire to sleep in the fields, under a canopy of stars.

Basic Attributes: Body 3, Heart 6, Wits 5

Favoured Skill: Craft

Distinctive Features
(choose two Traits from those listed)
Bold, Eager, Generous, Merciful, Merry, Patient, True-hearted, Trusty

2 - Too Many Paths to Tread

Your father was a tradesman and you were supposed to take his place in his workshop in Hardbottle at the age of 33. But before that time, a mysterious wanderlust took you and you were away from home for months. When you came back, you renounced your position, to the outrage of your whole neighbourhood. But you know that secretly your father approves: he always dreamed of leaving the Shire to 'go and see Elves'!

Basic Attributes: Body 4, Heart 5, Wits 5

Favoured Skill: Travel

Distinctive Features
(choose two Traits from those listed)
Adventurous, Clever, Curious, Eager, Keen-eyed, Nimble, Robust, True-hearted

3 - A Good Listener

Your uncle was a Sheriff, and often brought you along with him when he went 'beating the bounds', that is, when he was appointed to watch the Shire's borders for Outsiders. More often than not, his watch included a visit to The Ivy Bush, a small inn on the Bywater Road. There, you have heard told the best stories over deep mugs of excellent beer.

Basic Attributes: Body 3, Heart 7, Wits 4

Favoured Skill: Riddle

Distinctive Features
(choose two Traits from those listed)
Cautious, Curious, Energetic, Fair-spoken, Honourable, Quick of Hearing, True-hearted, Trusty

4 - Witty Gentleman

You come from a well-to-do family of landed gentry of the Westfarthing, living in a Hobbit-hole in Michel Delving. It is rumoured that your great-grandfather once vanished, only to show up three days later at the local inn, talking of

a giant Tree-man he had seen on the North Moors. Some believe your family's fortune is based on the giant's hoard your ancestor discovered, but you have been able to dispel such rumours with your humorous remarks.

Basic Attributes: Body 2, Heart 6, Wits 6

Favoured Skill: Persuade

Distinctive Features
(choose two Traits from those listed)
Cautious, Clever, Elusive, Honourable, Keen-eyed, Patient, Proud, True-hearted

5 - Bucklander

Your parents belong to the folk of Buckland, and you were brought up on the 'wrong side of the Brandywine River', as they say. If half the tales be true, members of your family have always displayed a certain queerness of character, and an unusual fighting spirit, a strangeness you seem to possess yourself.

Basic Attributes: Body 4, Heart 6, Wits 4

Favoured Skill: Awe

Distinctive Features
(choose two Traits from those listed)
Energetic, Fair-spoken, Merry, Nimble, Proud, Quick of Hearing, Reckless, True-hearted

6 - Tookish Blood

You grew up peacefully in a farmhouse in the Marish, Eastfarthing, until something Tookish stirred in your blood and overcame your respectability. It first happened on your way home one night, when you spotted some outlandish folk around a bright camp-fire. When you described them to your grandmother, she told you they were Dwarves, on their way to the Blue Mountains. From that night you started to shun well-trodden paths, hoping to meet other wayfarers secretly crossing the Shire.

Basic Attributes: Body 2, Heart 7, Wits 5

Favoured Skill: Explore

Distinctive Features
(choose two Traits from those listed)
Adventurous, Bold, Elusive, Generous, Merciful, Reckless, Robust, True-hearted

Hobbit Names

Hobbits names are composed by a first name and a family name. First names for boys are usually simple and short, with Hobbit girls being often given names of flowers or precious stones, but among the older families survives a custom of giving more heroic and high-sounding names whose origin can be traced back to a time before the Shire. Names like Fredegar or Hildibrand betray a common root with similar names used by Men in the vales of the Great River. Family names seem to fall into three main categories: surnames without a traceable meaning (Baggins, Boffin, Took), 'descriptive' surnames (Hornblower, Proudfoot), and surnames hinting at a geographical feature (Burrows, Hayward).

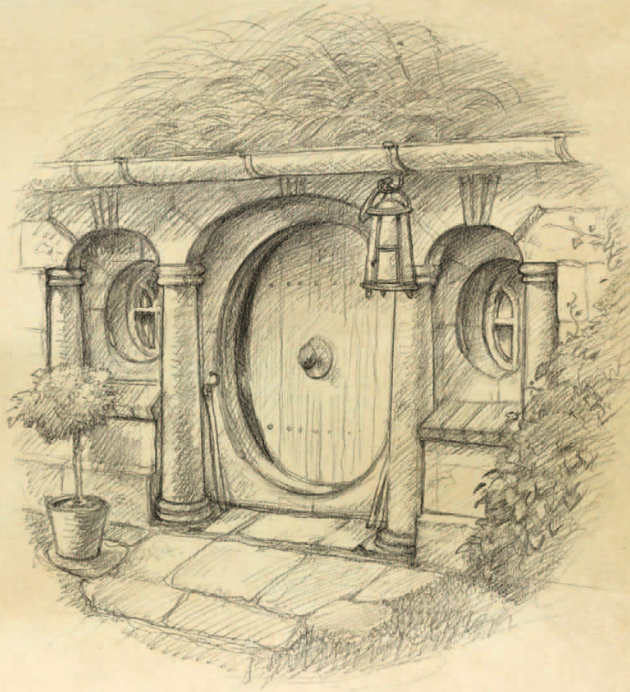
Male Names: Adalgrim, Adelard, Andwise, Balbo, Bandobras, Berilac, Bilbo, Bingo, Blanco, Bodo, Bowman, Bucca, Bungo, Carl, Cotman, Cottar, Dinonas, Doderic, Dodinas, Drogo, Dudo, Erling, Everard, Falco, Fastred, Ferdibrand, Ferdinand, Ferumbras, Filibert, Flambard, Folco, Fortinbras, Fosco, Fredegar, Frodo, Gerontius, Gorbadoc, Gorbulas, Gorhendad, Gormadoc, Griffo, Halfred, Hamfast, Hamson, Harding, Hending, Hildibrand, Hildifons, Hildigard, Hildigrim, Hob, Hobson, Holfast, Holman, Hugo, Ilberic, Isembard, Isembold, Isemgrim, Isengar, Isumbras, Largo, Longo, Lotho, Madoc, Marcho, Marmadas, Marmadoc, Marroc, Meriadoc, Merimac, Merimas, Milo, Minto, Moro, Mosco, Mungo, Nob, Odo, Odovacar, Olo, Orgulas, Otho, Paladin, Peregrin, Polo, Ponto, Porto, Posco, Reginard, Robin, Rorimac, Rudigar, Rufus, Sadoc, Samwise, Sancho, Saradas, Saradoc, Seredic, Sigismond, Ted, Tobold, Togo, Tolman, Wilcome, Will, Wiseman.

Female Names: Adaldrida, Adamanta, Amaranth, Angelica, Asphodel, Belba, Bell, Belladonna, Berylla, Camellia, Celandine, Chica, Daisy, Donnamira, Dora, Eglantine, Elanor, Esmeralda, Estella, Gilly, Hanna, Hilda, Lily, Linda, Lobelia, Malva, Marigold, May, Melilot, Menegilda, Mentha, Mimosa, Mirabella, Myrtle, Pansy, Pearl, Peony, Pervinca, Pimpernel, Poppy, Primrose, Primula, Prisca, Rosamunda, Rosa, Rose, Ruby, Salvia, Tanta.

Family Names: Baggins, Banks, Boffin, Bolger, Bracegirdle, Brandybuck, Brown, Brownlock, Bunce, Burrows, Chubb, Cotton, Gamgee, Gardner, Goldworthy, Goodbody, Goodchild, Goold, Greenhand, Grubb, Hayward, Headstrong, Hornblower, Maggot, Noakes, North-Tooks, Proudfoot, Puddifoot, Roper, Rumble, Sackville, Sandyman, Smallburrow, Took, Twofoot, Whitfoot.

Adventuring Age: 25-60

Hobbits do not easily abandon their comfortable lives, but when they do they usually wait at least for their coming of age at 33. But a particularly reckless Hobbit might feel the call to adventure when in his tweens, as Hobbits call their twenties.



- Woodmen of Wilderland -

"There were many of them, and they were brave and well armed, and even the Wargs dared not attack them if there were many together, or in the bright day."

Almost two thousand years ago, a shadow crept from the South and slowly drew all light from the heart of Greenwood the Great to its farthest eaves. People began calling the forest Mirkwood, and learnt to fear its deepest recesses. In spite of the darkness, many lingered along the forest's borders, fearless sons of Men who defied the menace of the Necromancer in his dreaded abode. These Woodmen have fought the growing darkness for as long as their oldest tellers of tales can remember, and they will continue the fight now that the Shadow has deserted its lair.

The Woodmen of Wilderland are frontiersmen of the North, having a shared heritage with the Bardings. They live in sparse, isolated villages and homesteads surrounded by wooden stockades, built along the borders of the great forest, or in the valleys to the west of the river. Threatened by the shadow of Dol Guldur and what lurks in the depths of Mirkwood, the Woodmen are hunters and trackers of wild animals, battling Orcs and Spiders in self-defence.

Traditionally, women fight and hunt alongside their men, or even alone if unmarried or widowed, in their struggle to survive in the hostile environment.

The Wizard Radagast, one of the Wise of Middle-earth, has chosen to live amongst the Woodmen since time immemorial, taking residence in Rhosgobel. A master of shapes and a tender of beasts, his teachings have proven invaluable to the hunters and animal-tamers among the Woodmen.

Description

As all Men of the North, they are commonly light-haired and tall, but often brown-skinned with a little red in their cheeks thanks to a life in the open. Sometimes deemed surly of speech and unforthcoming by other folk, they are rangers and hunters, haters of Orcs and Spiders, skilled in fighting in the deep of the woods with bows of yew, stout spears, and long-hafted axes. They were once skilful tamers of steeds and hunting dogs, but their life under the Shadow has forced them to mostly abandon the training of horses, and to favour that of hounds.

Standard of Living

The Woodmen carve a living out of meagre hunts, burning charcoal and breeding animals. Their constant fight with the Wood and its wild things leaves them struggling to do more than simply survive. Their culture ranks as *Frugal*.

Woodman Adventurers

All Woodman fathers and mothers fear the day when they will see their favoured sons' and daughters' eyes gleam with faraway thoughts, for they know that the wild-wood and its secrets may fill the bravest of hearts and entangle them with a longing that cannot be satisfied if they remain at home. But, if that day cannot be averted, they hope at least that their road to adventure won't lead them to forsake the defence of their own folk, as every Woodman knows the very real threat posed by the Shadow.

Suggested Callings: Wanderer, Warden. The Woodmen are as wild as their savage home, and when they travel it is not for any purpose, but for wildness's sake, although many continue to guard against the Shadow wherever they go.

Unusual Calling: Scholar. Dour and practical, Woodmen take little interest in study.

What Radagast the Brown Says...

- **Bardings:**
  "I dearly hope their friendship with the Dwarves doesn't make them equally as blind to the beauty of the things that live and grow."

- **Beornings:**
  "Beorn and his folk are stalwart allies of all true enemies of the Shadow. He knows that the peace we are enjoying is a fragile thing, to be cherished and fostered."

- **Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain:**
  "The Dwarves reserve their love for stone and gems, things that they can shape with their hands rather than things that are truly alive. That is why you and I can never fully understand them."

- **Elves of Mirkwood:**
  "King Thranduil knows what lurks in the dark and fears it, but he doesn't let his fear be the master of him."

- **Hobbits of the Shire:**
  "There was a time when a folk of halflings lived and fished along the river shores. The Woodmen know nothing more than a few old songs and children's tales today."

- **Woodmen of Wilderland:**
  "A long time ago I came here out of the West that is forgotten. The people of the Wood gave me a name, and a reason to remain. Since that day they have brought me their children so that I could bless them, and to this day in their innocent eyes I see the spirit of a folk that doesn't claim dominion over the things that grow and live, but yearns to live in harmony with them."

Cultural Blessing

- Woodcrafty -

"Radagast is... a master of shapes and changes of hue..."

The Woodmen know the woods so well that they can put a name on every shade of green found in a forest. Wearing the proper raiment and adopting clever ploys suggested by the Brown Wizard, they can trick the eyes of others and use the many obstacles found in the woods to their advantage.

- When the Woodmen fight in the woods, they use their favoured Wits score as their basic Parry rating.

Starting Skill Scores

Common Skills

Copy the following skill ranks onto the character sheet and underline the favoured skill:

Awe	0	Inspire	1	Persuade	0
Athletics	2	Travel	0	Stealth	2
Awareness	2	Insight	0	Search	0
Explore	3	Healing	3	Hunting	2
Song	1	Courtesy	0	Riddle	1
Craft	1	Battle	1	Lore	0

Weapon Skills

Choose one of the following two Weapon skill sets, and record it on the character sheet:

1) (Bows) 2, Long-hafted Axe 1, Dagger 1
2) Long-hafted Axe 2, and Spear 1, Dagger 1

Specialities

Choose two Traits from:

Anduin-lore, Beast-lore, Fishing, Herb-lore, Leechcraft, Mirkwood-lore

Backgrounds

1 - The Hound

The dogs bred by the folk of Woodland Hall are dun in colour, long of limb, sharp-nosed, gaunt and great. Since you were a child, you have always felt drawn to their natural grace and ferocious loyalty. But, above all, you share their love for the hunt, and you can feel their excitement when they are closing in on their prey.

Basic Attributes: Body 3, Heart 4, Wits 7

Favoured Skill: Hunting

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed)*
Bold, Eager, Elusive, Forthright, Generous, Gruff, Hardy, Proud

2 – Wizard's Pupil

Many years ago, you and your sisters and brothers used to challenge each other to recall the stories depicted in the woven tapestries hung along the walls of the great hall of Rhosgobel. One day, you caught the attention of the Wizard Radagast, and he told you how the deeds of your ancestors were handed down from generation to generation as songs. He taught you that there are important lessons to be learnt from the past, and from the actions of those that came before you.

Basic Attributes: Body 3, Heart 5, Wits 6

Favoured Skill: Song

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed)*
Bold, Cunning, Forthright, Just, Patient, Proud, Swift, Tall

3 – Fairy Heritage

They say your mother was as fair as an Elf-maiden, and that your father spirited her away from the Wood of Sorcery far in the South. You don't know if this is true, although you doubt it, as there was nothing sorcerous in her true love for you and your father. You remember that her senses oftentimes proved to be very sharp, as yours promise to be.

Basic Attributes: Body 4, Heart 4, Wits 6

Favoured Skill: Awareness

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed)*
Adventurous, Bold, Just, Curious, Fair, Reckless, Tall, True-hearted

4 – Apprentice to the Mountain-folk

The precious ore that hammer and anvil shape into tools and weapons is difficult to come by in the vales of the Great River, and commerce has grown thin in the years of ever-growing darkness. When you were younger, you and many other children of your age were sent by the alderman of your clan to join the workers in the mines above Mountain Hall. You remember long days as dark as winter nights, spent underground searching for the glimmer that would put swords into the hands of the warriors of your folk, and needed tools for shepherds, hunters and farmers alike.

Basic Attributes: Body 4, Heart 5, Wits 5

Favoured Skill: Search

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed)*
Bold, Elusive, Hardened, Hardy, Gruff, Stern, True-hearted, Wary

5 – Seeker

The wild-wood can scare the hardiest of men, but that didn't stop you and your brothers from climbing every tree and running along any path you could find under the eaves of the forest. Your father's rules prevented you from straying from the paths connecting Woodland Hall to the southern homesteads, but at times you have seen glimpses of queer things where the shadows in the woods are deeper. Now that you have outgrown your father's authority, your thirst for adventure won't be easily quenched.

Basic Attributes: Body 2, Heart 5, Wits 7

Favoured Skill: Athletics

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed)*
Adventurous, Bold, Curious, Determined, Eager, Generous, Reckless, Swift

6 – Sword-day Counsellor

When he was a youth, your uncle severely injured his own right leg, mishandling his axe. Deprived of his rightful place among the active warriors of your folk, he instead turned to his wits and experience to contribute to the fight against the Shadow. His cunning was instrumental in

many a victory on the field of battle. He proved to you that when war is at hand, good advice is as important as good swords to ensure triumph.

Basic Attributes: Body 2, Heart 6, Wits 6

Favoured Skill: Battle

Distinctive Features
(*choose two Traits from those listed*)
Bold, Cunning, Determined, Fair, Gruff, Hardened, Patient, Wary

Woodmen Names

The Northmen inhabiting the Vales of the Anduin River – the Beornings and Woodmen – speak the same language and share a common vocabulary of personal names. The two folk favour different names, but are set apart by their peculiar use of bynames and nicknames.

The Woodmen do not show particular preferences, but it is a common practice among adventurers to keep their real name a secret, preferring to let themselves be known only by a nickname (the Bride, the Hound).

Male Names: Adalard, Ageric, Agilfrid, Agiulf, Alaric, Alberic, Amalric, Amand, Andagis, Atalaric, Atanagild, Ansegisel, Ansovald, Aregisel, Arnulf, Audovald, Avagis, Badegisel, Baldac, Balderic, Barald, Beorn, Beran, Beranald, Berangar, Bertefried, Beormud, Cilderic, Eberulf, Eboric, Ebregisel, Ebrimuth, Ediulf, Ermanaric, Euric, Eutaric, Evermud, Evoric, Frideger, Gararic, Garivald, Geberic, Gisalric, Gerold, Grimald, Grimbald, Grimbeorn, Grimfast, Gundovald, Hartgard, Hartmut, Hartnid, Hathus, Heriwulf, Hildebald, Imnachar, Ingelram, Ingund, Iwald, Iwgar, Leudast, Magneric, Malaric, Maracar, Merovech, Munderic, Odo, Odovacar, Otbert, Ragnacar, Ramnulf, Rathar, Reginar, Ricfried, Rigunth, Roderic, Sigeric, Sigibert, Sunnegisil, Theodard, Theodebert, Theodemir, Theodwin, Theudebald, Theuderic, Thorismund, Walcaud, Waleran,Widuven, Willicar, Wulferd.

Female Names: Adosinda, Amalfrida, Amalina, Avagisa, Avina, Beranhild, Brunihild, Gailavira, Garsendis, Geleswinta, Gelvira, Grimhild, Hermesind, Heva, Hilduara, Radegund.

Woodman Nicknames: The Bird-keeper, the Bowman, the Bride, the Bright one, the Eagle, the Healer, the Hound, the Hunter, the Quick, the Shepherd, the Shield-bearer, the Silent one, the Spear-shaker, the Wood-goer.

Adventuring Age: 16-30
Woodmen don't usually become adventurers before their 16th year of age, and rarely continue beyond their forties, when they retire to serve their family and folk.

- customisation -

Once players have chosen their characters' culture, background and Distinctive Features, and copied relevant information to their character sheet, they can further customise their hero's characteristics and abilities.

Callings

Leaving home and setting off on the road is a courageous choice; it can also be a reckless one, and is often disapproved of by a hero's family and folk. Characters will be leaving behind all they know and love, so they must have a strong motivation to become an adventurer. This motivation is known as a character's calling.

Each player chooses his character's calling from the list below. These descriptions do not represent a character's profession or trade , but the ambitions and aspirations that eventually set him on the road. While a calling can be used to summarise a character's drive as he starts out, they should not be viewed as restrictions; the heroes are likely to evolve in the course of the game. From a gaming perspective, the choice of a calling offers players a way to customise their characters and add details.

Favoured Skill Groups

Each calling description lists two Common skill groups. When a player selects a calling, he chooses two skills from the favoured groups (from either group, or one from each group), and underlines them as favoured skills.

Additional Trait

Those who follow a calling have an interest or ability in common. Each calling gives characters a unique Trait.

Shadow Weakness

The driving motivation behind an adventurer's calling can be twisted and perverted if he succumbs to evil temptations or seeks to exert his own will upon others. A character's Shadow weakness suggests the path he would follow if he failed to resist the Shadow's influence (see Part Seven: The Shadow for details).

- scholar -

"Speak no secrets! Here is a scholar in the Ancient Tongue."

For you, knowledge makes the wild world a less threatening place to live in. Strangers become friends if addressed properly, yellowed maps in lost books replace a fear of the unknown with curiosity and wonder of places you have yet to explore, songs composed in ages past strengthen the weariest of hearts. A love of learning guides your every step, and illuminates the way for you and those who listen to your advice.

Favoured Skill Groups: Perception, Vocation
Trait: Rhymes of Lore
Shadow Weakness: Lure of Secrets

- Slayer -

"The day will come when they will perish and I shall go back!"

You or your family have suffered a terrible loss at another's hands. You have become an adventurer to take your revenge on whoever wronged you, or maybe just to leave behind a life that you are not able to enjoy any more. Yours is a difficult path to tread, as what you have been through makes it hard to give your trust to anybody.

Favoured Skill Groups: Movement, Personality
Trait: Enemy-lore (choose one enemy type from Dragons, Giants, Orcs, Spiders, Trolls, or Wolves)
Shadow Weakness: Curse of Vengeance

- Treasure Hunter -

"Far over the misty mountains cold, To dungeons deep and caverns old, We must away ere break of day, To seek the pale enchanted gold."

This world has seen the passing of the glory of many Dwarven kings and Elven lords, and their heritage is now buried in deep dungeons and dim caverns. Pale gold and bright jewels beckon all who dare to find them. Be it a family treasure stolen by raiding Goblins or the golden hoard of a Dragon, you seek what is lost, even when this means you will have to brave unspeakable dangers.

Favoured Skill Groups: Movement, Perception
Trait: Burglary
Shadow Weakness: Dragon-sickness

- Wanderer -

"...most of our kindred have long ago departed, and we too are now only tarrying here a while, ere we return over the Great Sea."

You see the wonders of living in Middle-earth even where the Shadow is deepest. Every corner of the land holds a promise of untold secrets, and this is why you have decided that any dell, cave and river vale can be your home, albeit briefly. For when the morning comes, another horizon will show your new destination.

Favoured Skill Groups: Custom, Survival
Trait: Folk-lore
Shadow Weakness: Wandering-madness

- Warden -

"Travellers scowl at us, and countrymen give us scornful names."

In this age of the world where shadows grow deeper with every passing year, you have sworn to defend all who cannot defend themselves. Often, your choice forces you to forsake civilised areas, to better guard their inhabitants from what lurks right outside their fences. This has made you a stranger to the eyes of the common folk, a threatening figure like those you are protecting them from.

Favoured Skill Groups: Personality, Survival
Trait: Shadow-lore
Shadow Weakness: Lure of Power

Favoured Attributes

Body, Heart and Wits are the fundamental ratings of all heroes in the game. Each character starts with a set of basic values determined by their chosen background. Players now get to generate their characters' Favoured Attributes, by adding bonuses to the basic scores. Favoured Attribute scores represent the character's potential to excel when drawing on his experiences and training.

To generate the scores possessed by a hero as Favoured Attributes, players add 3 to one Attribute, 2 to a second Attribute, and 1 to the remaining one, copying the new totals in the smaller boxes overlapping the Attribute boxes on the character sheet.

Peter is determining the Favoured Attributes for his Woodman warden. The background for his character has given him the following basic scores: Body 3, Heart 4, and Wits 7. Peter decides to enhance his already high Wits score by adding +3 (raising his favoured Wits score to 10), and then to add +2 to his Body and +1 to his Heart, raising both favoured Attribute scores to 5.

Previous Experience

Players may now raise some of their skill levels, to represent their heroes' experiences prior to their life as fully-fledged adventurers.

Players have 10 points to spend on raising their skills. The cost of raising each skill is shown in the two tables below. The first table gives the costs for Common skill levels, while the second shows the costs for Weapon skill levels.

Players are free to raise their skills as they see fit, as long as they have enough points to buy the desired skill level. They can also buy ranks in skills they previously didn't possess at all, or buy multiple ranks in the same skill, as long as they pay the cost of each level individually.

Players may also buy a first level in a new individual Weapon skill, but not a new Cultural Weapon skill.

Common Skill level to attain	Cost
♦	1 point
♦♦	2 points
♦♦♦	3 points
♦♦♦♦	4 points
♦♦♦♦♦	5 points

Weapon Skill level to attain	Cost
♦	2 points
♦♦	4 points
♦♦♦	6 points

*A player wanting to go from **Athletics ♦** to **Athletics ♦♦♦♦** would spend a total of 9 points (2 to raise it from ♦ to ♦♦, 3 to go from ♦♦ to ♦♦♦ and 4 to go from ♦♦♦ to ♦♦♦♦).*

Endurance and Hope

Endurance and Hope are the fundamental resources that keep a character going. Their starting scores are based on a hero's basic Heart rating and modified by his Culture (as shown on the table below).

Starting Resources:

Culture	Endurance	Hope
Bardings	22 + Heart	8 + Heart
Beornings	24 + Heart	8 + Heart
Dwarves	28 + Heart	6 + Heart
Elves	22 + Heart	8 + Heart
Hobbits	16 + Heart	12 + Heart
Woodmen	20 + Heart	10 + Heart

Starting Gear

All heroes start their adventuring career fully equipped with all the personal items and gear they consider best suited to a life on the road. For the sake of simplicity, the game presents such possessions as a character's travelling gear and war gear.

Fatigue Score

A player-hero's travelling equipment and each piece of war gear possesses an Encumbrance rating, representing the hindrance that the item causes to the carrier, both in terms of weight and discomfort (for example, a helm which significantly limits its wearer's vision has a higher Encumbrance rating than a suit of leather armour, regardless of weight).

All the Encumbrance ratings of the various items normally carried by a hero are added up to find his Fatigue score, to be recorded on a character sheet alongside his Endurance rating (see page 127 to learn about the effects of Fatigue on a hero).

Travelling Gear

A hero's travelling gear includes all the typical belongings that he carries when travelling, in addition to his weapons and armour. Players only take into consideration the Encumbrance rating of their travelling gear when they are using the rules for resolving a Journey (see page 158).

The Encumbrance rating of travelling gear varies depending on the time of the year:

Winter and autumn gear (in the cold months of the year): thick warm clothes (jackets, fur-lined cloaks), blankets, water, food. Winter travelling gear for one character has an Encumbrance rating of 3.

Summer and spring gear (in the warm months of the year): light clothes and cloaks, blankets, water, food. Summer travelling gear has an Encumbrance rating of 2.

Both sets of travelling gear include food supplies for one week of travelling (if the journey is going to last more than a week, the companions will generally have to rely on their skills as hunters).

Musical Instruments

Music and song is an important part of the culture of the Free Peoples. Skilled musicians will usually carry one or more musical instruments with them on their travels.

If a player-hero possesses a **Song** skill level of 1 or more, his travelling gear may include a musical instrument appropriate to his culture.

Gear of War

Any weapon, suit of armour, helm or shield carried by an adventurer must be individually recorded on the character sheet, along with its Encumbrance rating. Their total Encumbrance score is taken into account to find a hero's Fatigue threshold.

Small-sized Heroes

Due to their reduced size, Hobbits and Dwarves cannot use larger weapons effectively. Dwarves fare somewhat better than Hobbits, as they are usually taller and their work as miners and smiths endows them with powerful arms and shoulders. The weapons available to Hobbits and Dwarves are as follows:

- **Dwarves:** short sword, sword, axe, great axe, spear, mattock, dagger, bow.

- **Hobbits:** short sword, axe, spear, dagger, bow.

Additionally, Dwarves and Hobbits cannot use a great shield.

Weapons

A starting player-hero is assumed to carry one weapon for each of the Weapon skills he has a rating for.

A Barding hero starts the game with Great Bow ♦♦ and Spear ♦. He is entitled to have a great bow and a spear among his possessions.

Heroes with Cultural Weapon skills may choose one specific weapon among a wider selection as part of his hero's possessions.

A Wood-elf hero with (Spears) ♦♦ is entitled to choose between carrying a spear or a great spear.

The lists on page 126 include all weapons that are available to players. Players should record the statistics for their chosen weapons on their character sheets.

Armour and Shields

A newly-created character starts with one suit of armour, and may choose one piece of headgear and one shield. Players should record their chosen armour, headgear and shields on their character sheets, paying attention to the following notes:

The Protection score of a coat of armour is recorded separately from that of a piece of headgear (as sometimes, during combat, a hero might resort to dropping it to avoid becoming Weary too soon).

Shields do not offer direct protection from wounds, but make a hero less likely to be hit, by adding to the Attribute used to parry incoming blows (usually Wits). A shield's rating is recorded separately from the main box devoted to Parry, as a shield can be smashed by an opponent's blows.

Additional Gear

If a player would like to expand his character's equipment beyond the scope of a hero's travelling gear and war gear, the decision is up to the Loremaster. If the Loremaster agrees, they should take the character's Standard of Living into consideration, to determine the quantity and quality of any additional items (see page 120). In general terms, the amount of extra equipment carried is as relevant as a Loremaster and his players want it to be: usually, Encumbrance is closely monitored only as far as war gear is concerned.

Combat Ratings

Sooner or later, every hero on the road to adventure faces a situation where his life will be threatened by hostile individuals or creatures. Indeed, many people in Middle-earth experience this without even leaving their home. An adventurer's basic combat abilities are reflected by his Parry rating and Damage bonus.

Damage

When a character hits his opponent in combat, he inflicts lost Endurance equal to his weapon's Damage rating. If he achieves a great success, he adds his character's Damage rating as a bonus to his weapon's Damage rating. If he scores an extraordinary success, he adds double his Damage rating to that of his weapon.

Usually, a character's Damage rating is equal to his basic Body score, both for attacks made with a close combat weapon or a ranged weapon.

Players should record their heroes' Damage bonus scores on the character sheet. Should a character's ranged attack Damage rating differ from that of close combat attacks, the player should record it in the separate box (special abilities and items might benefit one type of attack or the other).

Parry

This is a defensive bonus, reflecting a character's ability to keep his head in a dangerous situation, to be aware of opponents' actions and to ward off an opponent's attacks.

Usually, the Parry rating of a character is equal to his basic Wits score, modified by a positive bonus if the

hero is using a buckler, a shield or a great shield (see the equipment tables on page 123).

Players should record their heroes' Parry score on the character sheet.

Valour and Wisdom

Valour and Wisdom measure a hero's resistance to Fear and the Shadow, and track his stature in terms of power and renown. Both scores range from 1 to 6, and rise over the course of the game.

Starting Scores

At this point in character generation, players are asked to simply prioritise one characteristic over the other:

A starting player gives a score of 2 to one characteristic, and 1 to the other. Both numbers are entered on the character sheet in the boxes labelled Wisdom and Valour.

Virtues and Rewards

Starting with rank 2, characters receive a special benefit with every new rank they reach in either Valour or Wisdom. Benefits obtained by raising a character's Valour score are called Rewards, while benefits granted by ranks in Wisdom are called Virtues.

Thus, when players choose between the characteristics during hero creation, they are also choosing if their characters will start the game with a Reward, or with a Virtue.

So, if a starting character has...

Valour 2 - Wisdom 1: the hero receives his first Reward. The player should refer to page 113 and note the details of the first Reward due to a hero of his character's Culture.

Wisdom 2 - Valour 1: the hero has displayed his first Virtue. The player should go to page 103 and read about how to choose a Virtue among those available to a hero of his character's Culture.

Cultural Virtues:

Culture	Virtues	Page
Bardings	Birthright, Fierce Shot, King's Men, Swordmaster, Woeful Foresight.	104
Beornings	Brothers to Bears, Night-goer, Skin-coat, Great Strength, Twice-baked Honey Cakes.	105
Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain	Broken Spells, Durin's Way, Old Hatred, Ravens of the Mountain, The Stiff Neck of Dwarves.	107
Elves of Mirkwood	Deadly Archery, Elvish Dreams, Shadow Bane, The Speakers, Wood-elf Magic.	108
Hobbits of the Shire	Art of Disappearing, Brave at a Pinch, Fair Shot, Tough in the Fibre, Small Folk.	110
Woodmen of Wilderland	A Hunter's Resolve, Herbal Remedies, Hound of Mirkwood, Natural Watchfulness, Staunching Song.	111

Cultural Rewards:

Culture	Reward	Page
Bardings	Dalish Longbow, Spear of King Bladorthin, Tower Shield.	116
Beornings	Giant-slaying Spear, Noble Armour, Splitting Axe.	116
Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain	Axe of the Azanulbizar, Dwarf-wrought Hauberk, Helm of Awe.	117
Elves of Mirkwood	Bitter Spear, Spearman's Shield, Woodland Bow.	117
Hobbits of the Shire	Bow of the North Downs, King's Blade, Lucky Armour.	118
Woodmen of Wilderland	Bearded Axe, Feathered Armour, Shepherds-bow.	118

- Company - Creation

"The Company of the Ring shall be Nine; and the Nine Walkers shall be set against the Nine Riders that are evil."

The group of characters created by players is a recently formed company of like-minded heroes. They may share a common short-term goal appointed by elders or a council of peoples, or they might all be young members of the same folk, ready to leave home for the first time to see the world.

After the players have finished creating their characters, they should discuss with the Loremaster the circumstances that brought the group together and forged them into a company of adventurers. The more detailed the description of the events that led to the characters setting off adventuring the better, as this will give the Loremaster valuable story hooks to turn into adventures that directly link to the characters' back-story.

How to Create a Company

The process of creating a company can be considered to be the first Fellowship phase played by the group (see page 192 for more on Fellowship phases). During company creation, the players are assisted by the Loremaster as they define the characteristics of their group of adventurers.

First Meeting

The first thing to do is decide where the company was formed. To do so, the players choose a suitable place from those named on the Adventurer's Map (see page 18). Locations that qualify as havens or sanctuaries are an ideal choice, as these are Free Peoples strongholds, cities or villages known to welcome or, at least, tolerate the presence of adventurers (Rivendell cannot be chosen as a starting haven: it is a hidden place, and the company must first find its way there during the game). As soon as everybody agrees on a location, its name is recorded by every player on the back of their character sheet.

When this is settled, the players briefly introduce their heroes, making sure to mention how and why they arrived

at the selected location in the first place; the heroes' cultures and callings can prove useful as starting points. The Loremaster could take this opportunity to provide information about the setting to less-knowledgeable players. Some places are particularly suited as locations for the first meeting of a company:

Beorn's House

The renowned chieftain of the Beornings is known to welcome wayfarers who aren't too demanding of his hospitality. The house of Beorn is an ideal place for a company interested in going hunting in the Misty Mountains.

Esgaroth

Lake-town faces the unknown East and stands between three kingdoms: the Woodland Realm, the Lonely Mountain, and Dale. It is a free city, full of opportunities for adventure.

Rhosgobel

The abode of the Brown Wizard, Rhosgobel stands facing the darkness of Dol Guldur, the hill of sorcery. Here, a community of Woodmen have gathered close to the home of the wise Radagast, and many travellers arrive every year to seek his counsel.

Relationships

All adventurers share a feeling of loyalty towards each other, but each of them can develop a particular level of companionship with another member of the group: it may be uncommon respect for someone wiser or nobler, a special friendship shared with an old acquaintance, the kinship felt for a fellow countryman, or deep affection for a dear family member.

Whatever the nature of the relationship, each player may elect another member of the company as his character's Fellowship focus, writing the name of this companion in the appropriate space on the character sheet.

Every player is free to indicate one companion of his choice as his focus. It can be any other player-hero, even one that has already been chosen by somebody else as his focus. The bond doesn't have to be mutual: a hero who has been chosen by another hero as his focus is free to choose any other character as his own. A Fellowship focus lets a character recover Hope without spending Fellowship (at the risk of gaining Shadow should the focus be harmed or killed); see page 133.

Fellowship Rating

The group of player-heroes is more than a band of roving mercenaries brought together by mere necessity. At its foundation are communal goals and mutual respect. This is recreated in the game by a shared pool of Fellowship points. During the game, players use these points to recover spent Hope.

The number of points available to a company of heroes at the beginning of the game is equal to the number of heroes in the group.

All players record the company's Fellowship total in the appropriate box on their character sheet. This score is updated every time that a companion uses a point to recover Hope, and it is fully replenished at the beginning of every game session; (see the rules concerning Fellowship on page 132).

– Part Three: Fundamental Characteristics –

- Attributes -

"...you have been chosen, and you must therefore use such strength and heart and wits as you have."

Adventurers are a diverse group of people, each with a unique combination of skills, abilities and traits. When faced with threats and difficulties, some favour strength and prowess to overcome them, some rely on fortitude and integrity to endure, and others opt for reasoning and astuteness to find a solution.

In *The One Ring*, numerical values are used to gauge each hero's capabilities in different fields. Attributes are characteristics that describe the character's fundamental physical, emotional and mental capabilities: **Body**, **Heart** and **Wits**.

Body (physical aptitude)

A character with a high Body score can be tough and fit, or tall and agile, or even attractive or imposing. Every aspect of a character that relies on vigour or physical well-being is represented in the game by Body.

Heart (force of spirit)

Measures a character's capacity for emotion, energy and enthusiasm. A hero with a high Heart score can be fiery, intense, and hard to demoralise. Activities that benefit from a passionate or energetic temper may be influenced by a character's Heart score.

Wits (mental aptitude)

A hero with a high Wits rating can be clever, attentive and strong-willed. A sharp-witted person is a quick thinker, and probably alert and vigilant, so any action that calls upon these qualities benefits from a hero's Wits score.

How Attributes Work

Attribute scores help players visualise their heroes, as the comparison between the three ratings provides a rough outline of a character that is recognisable at a glance: is a hero physically stronger than he is spiritually robust? Or are his wits his distinctive quality? Attributes describe a hero in broad strokes. During the game, Attributes come into play in a number of situations, most often as a bonus to die roll results.

Attribute Bonus

Whenever dice are rolled, players may choose to spend a point of Hope to gain a bonus to the result equal to the rating of the most appropriate Attribute. This is called an Attribute bonus.

A physical task or test may be modified by Body, a challenge affecting the morale of the character or their relationship with another person would use the Heart score, while a contest of cunning may be affected by their Wits.

Summary of the Uses of a Character's Attribute Scores

Body is used to determine a character's starting Damage bonus. As an Attribute bonus, a hero's Body score can be added to all attack and Protection tests in combat.

Heart may be called upon as an Attribute bonus to a player-hero's Fear and Corruption tests, and when recovering or **healing** from wounds. A hero's Endurance and Hope score are based upon his Heart rating.

Wits is used to determine the difficulty to hit a player-hero, as its rating determines a hero's base Parry score. In addition, Wits may be used to determine who acts first when two or more characters are fighting in the same stance (see Combat, on page 166).

Attribute Ratings

Attributes range in value from 1 to 12; a score of 1 is extremely weak, while 12 represents the highest level of excellence.

Attribute ratings:

Rating	Description
1-2	poor
3-4	average
5-6	good
7-8	superior
9-10	outstanding
11-12	prodigious

Heroes generally start the game with ratings ranging from 2 (poor) to 7 (superior), before calculating favoured Attributes.

Basic and Favoured Attributes

As can be seen on the character sheet, there are two boxes to be filled in for each Attribute, one larger and one smaller. The larger square boxes are used to record an Attribute's basic score, while the smaller round ones are used to write an Attribute's *favoured* score.

The basic score of an Attribute is the one a player has copied from the chosen (or randomly selected) background entry, found listed in the culture template selected for the hero. An Attribute's basic rating is used as an Attribute bonus in most tests (those not involving favoured skills) and to generate a hero's characteristics (like his Endurance and Hope scores, Parry rating and Damage bonuses). An Attribute's favoured score is determined during the 'customisation' stage of character creation (page 73), and is used as an Attribute bonus when the hero is using a favoured skill.

A hero's favoured Attributes reflect his greater affinity with those skills he finds more familiar.

Improving Attribute Scores

A character's Attribute ratings can be altered only by choosing the Gifted Mastery (see Virtues, on page 104), either by starting the game with a score of Wisdom 2, or by raising it during play:

By selecting the Gifted Mastery one or more times, a player can raise his character's favoured Attribute scores.

- Skills -

"There is food in the wild," said Strider; "berry, root, and herb; and I have some skill as a hunter at need."

Heroes reveal themselves through their actions, as their strengths and weaknesses emerge when they are put to the test. The result of their families' teachings, their culture's traditions and their own training and study, skills are the foundations of what a character can achieve, and how he develops during play.

Skill Rating

A hero's proficiency in a skill is represented by his skill ranks, ranging from 0 (lowest) to 6 (highest). Players record

their heroes' ratings in each skill separately, by filling the diamond-shaped boxes to the right of the skill's name. Heroes generally start the game with scores between 0 (*unskilled*) and 3 (*good*).

Rating	Description
-	unskilled
♦	poor
♦♦	average
♦♦♦	good
♦♦♦♦	superior
♦♦♦♦♦	outstanding
♦♦♦♦♦♦	prodigious

When using a skill, the player rolls a number of Success dice equal to his character's skill ranks, in addition to the Feat die. If a hero is unskilled (rank 0) he is usually entitled to try normally, by rolling only the Feat die.

Favoured Skills

Every individual tends to excel in some areas, either due to natural talent, or from long experience, or because his family and community have handed down secrets through the generations. In the game, abilities that come more easily to a hero are called *favoured* skills, and are represented on the character sheet by underlining the skill's name.

A player chooses some favoured skills during character creation, and can develop additional ones in the course of his career by selecting the Expertise Mastery (see Virtues, on page 104). When invoking an Attribute bonus on a favoured skill, a hero adds the (higher) favoured Attribute rating to the die roll results.

Common Skills

The 18 Common skills cover wide areas of knowledge or ability possessed by the majority of individuals living in Middle-earth, enabling the players and Loremaster to resolve most situations encountered during play.

A character's Common skills may improve rapidly during the game, if he puts his abilities to good use and earns Advancement points (see page 195).

Common Skill Categories

Common skills are divided into three categories, depending on which Attribute most influences the skill. For ease of reference, the skills on the character sheet are organised into three columns, under the three Attributes, Body, Heart and Wits, from left to right.

Body Skills

All skills in this category rely largely on the hero's physical aptitude. A character with a high Body is more likely to be imposing (**Awe**), to have a clear singing voice (**Song**), to be fit and agile (**Athletics**), to have good sight and hearing (**Awareness, Explore**) and to possess skillful hands (**Craft**).

Heart Skills

The skills under this category depend on the hero's force of spirit more than anything else. A character with a high Heart score may be a charismatic leader (**Inspire**, **Battle**), an energetic guide (**Travel**), a gracious gentleman (**Courtesy**), be able to read the hearts of others (**Insight**) or to understand their hurts and how to heal them (**Healing**).

Wits Skills

A hero's mental aptitude affects those skills that rely on quick thinking and creativity. A hero with a high Wits value will quickly learn clever oratory (**Persuade**), the arts of a burglar (**Stealth**), or attentiveness (**Search**, **Hunting**), and will be intelligent and studious (**Riddle**, **Lore**).

Common Skill Groups

Aside from being classed by governing attribute, the 18 Common skills are also collected into six *skill groups*, each of which is associated with a different type of activity.

The names of the six groups are printed on the rightmost side of the character sheet:

Personality Skills (Awe, Inspire, Persuade)

A hero's personality comes through in his capacity to impress, encourage and influence others. A good level of proficiency in all three skills in this group is the mark of a leader.

Movement Skills (Athletics, Travel, Stealth)
Overcoming obstacles, enduring long journeys and moving secretly are the stuff adventurers are made of.

Perception Skills (Awareness, Insight, Search)
The ability to catch hidden details often pays off, be it noticing an odd noise that gives away an ambusher, catching the gleam in the eyes of a liar or spotting the crack in the wall that reveals a secret door.

Survival Skills (Explore, Healing, Hunting)
The three skills of this group, essential for a roving adventurer, make a hero an invaluable member of a company.

Custom Skills (Courtesy, Song, Riddle)
While heroes are often held to be uncivilised brutes by the common folk, their lives can sometimes depend on knowing the proper words, wisest song or cleverest answer. Excelling in these skills is considered a noble achievement.

Vocation Skills (Craft, Battle, Lore)
Before his resolve hardened and pushed a hero on his road to adventure, he probably led a life much like an ordinary individual of his folk; learning a trade, defending his people and absorbing their accumulated wisdom.

Common Skill List:

Body	Heart	Wits	Skill Groups
Awe	Inspire	Persuade	*Personality*
Athletics	Travel	Stealth	*Movement*
Awareness	Insight	Search	*Perception*
Explore	Healing	Hunting	*Survival*
Song	Courtesy	Riddle	*Custom*
Craft	Battle	Lore	*Vocation*

Common Skills Descriptions

This section describes what each skill means in the game. Each Common skill's category and group is indicated after the skill's name, in brackets.

Athletics (Body, Movement)

Poor Mr. Baggins had never had much practice in climbing trees, but they hoisted him up into the lowest branches of an enormous oak that grew right out into the path, and up he had to go as best he could.

Athletics is a broad skill, covering most of the physical activities that a hero might undertake while adventuring, including running, leaping, climbing, swimming and throwing stones or other small objects. Heroes with high **Athletics** skill scores exhibit a winning combination of physical prowess, grace and control, generally gained through continuous exercise and daily exertion.

A successful **Athletics** roll produces a satisfactory outcome in the physical activity, while a failed roll might even lead to serious harm, depending on the circumstances. A great or extraordinary result suggests a spectacular achievement.

Awareness (Body, Perception)

"Well, it is the first time that even a mouse has crept along carefully and quietly under my very nose and not been spotted," said Balin, "and I take off my hood to you."

The **Awareness** skill represents a hero's readiness to react and his ability to notice something unexpected, out of the ordinary, or difficult to detect. High skill reflects both keen senses and the experience to understand what you see and hear.

A high **Awareness** rating expresses an extraordinary watchfulness, and is extremely useful to a companion who serves as a look-out for the company.

Awe (Body, Personality)

For a moment it seemed to the eyes of Legolas that a white flame flickered on the brows of Aragorn like a shining crown.

This skill measures a hero's capacity to provoke respect in onlookers, and determines the impression a hero makes on someone he meets for the first time. Depending on the circumstances and the hero's intentions or disposition, it can be used to instill wonderment, admiration, or even fear. **Awe** arises from a character's native charisma,

but can also be engineered with a dramatic entrance or impressive attire.

A successful use of the skill provokes the chosen effect. A failure fails to have any impact, or can even lead to the opposite result! Achieving a great success means that the hero has won the hearts of the onlookers, or cowed them into silent submission. An extraordinary success may produce open reverence, or panic.

Battle (Heart, Vocation)

"Fools!" laughed Bard, "to come thus beneath the Mountain's arm! They do not understand war above ground, whatever they may know of battle in the mines."

A hero's proficiency in this skill shows his grasp of the rules of battle, and his ability to keep his head when involved in a violent confrontation. The **Battle** skill can be used to gain an advantage when involved in a fight with a group of foes, or to lead a company of men in open battle and maintain order in the midst of chaos (combat itself is covered by Weapon skills).

Courtesy (Heart, Custom)

"You have nice manners for a thief and a liar," said the Dragon.

The Free Peoples recognise common norms of decency and ancient conventions of behaviour. Observing these traditions demonstrates respect and is a way of quickly establishing a friendly footing even with complete strangers.

A hero succeeding in a **Courtesy** roll knows what to say at the right moment to make a good impression with their host, or is mindful of his manners when receiving guests.

Craft (Body, Vocation)

...the only craft little practised among them was shoe-making; but they had long and skilful fingers and could make many other useful and comely things.

The **Craft** skill doesn't really cover the whole range of abilities of smiths, wrights and other artisans, but reflects the talent of a character for making or mending things by hand, although Traits like Smithcraft or Woodwright can be used to reflect proficiency in a specific craft. **Craft** could be used to attempt to repair the wheel of a cart, or construct an improvised raft with wood found on a river shore, or even when trying to start a fire on a windy hill.

A high **Craft** score may indicate that the hero was a craftsman before starting his life of adventure. Some races, such as the Dwarves and Noldor Elves, revere crafts as the highest expression of creativity.

Explore (Body, Survival)

"We have found a dry cave," they said, "not far round the next corner; and ponies and all could get inside."

Adventurers rely on their **Explore** skill when they move through an unfamiliar area of the Wild. An **Explore** test may be required during a journey to find the company's heading, or to get back on track after a detour; to cope with adverse weather conditions or other natural hazards; to create paths through the wilderness suitable for others to follow; or to choose a suitable place to set up camp. A high **Explore** rating is an invaluable resource for a companion acting as a scout for his group of adventurers.

Healing (Heart, Survival)

As a matter of fact, Gandalf, who had often been in the mountains, had once rendered a service to the eagles and healed their lord from an arrow-wound.

The knowledge of how to relieve pain and apply remedies to restore health to the suffering is an ancient one, and treatments differ from culture to culture. Almost all traditions, however, agree on the treatment of serious injuries, which must be immediately tended to keep from worsening.

The **Healing** skill includes bone setting and the use of herbs or salves, but the outcome relies on the ability of the healer to understand what ails the sufferer and determine what should be done.

Hunting (Wits, Survival)

> **They dwelt most often by the edges of the woods, from which they could escape at times to hunt, or to ride and run over the open lands by moonlight or starlight...**

Knowing how to hunt is a fundamental skill common in much of Middle-earth. A **Hunting** roll may be required when pursuing a creature through wild areas, or to locate tracks and follow them, or to identify a quarry by its spoor. The skill also covers preparing traps and the training and use of hunting dogs or birds. In wilder areas, hunters learn to apply their trade to more dangerous quarry, such as Orcs, Spiders or Wargs, or else risk becoming the prey.

Insight (Heart, Perception)

> **"There are locked doors and closed windows in your mind, and dark rooms behind them," said Faramir. "But in this I judge that you speak the truth. It is well for you."**

Insight is the ability of a hero to see beyond appearances, recognising people's hidden thoughts and beliefs. Heroes with **Insight** can recognise when someone is lying, and can draw useful conclusions about people's motives. A hero with a high **Insight** score is often recognised as being a sensible and discerning individual, and many might seek his counsel. A successful **Insight** roll provides the hero with a faithful, if partial, portrait of the character observed. A great or extraordinary success reveals truths about an individual of which he himself is ignorant. **Insight** tests may be rolled in opposition to an adversary using **Persuade** or another Personality skill.

Inspire (Heart, Personality)

> **...the grim-voiced man ... ran to and fro, cheering on the archers and urging the Master to order them to fight to the last arrow.**

A hero able to **Inspire** others can instill positive feelings in others, urging them to act on the matter at hand. This is a feat achieved mainly through example, charisma and personal conviction, rather than through the effective use of words (which falls under **Persuade**, below). It can be used on individuals, but is especially effective in influencing crowds. Heroes with high **Inspire** ratings can be forceful orators, passionate agitators, and well-loved leaders of men.

A successful **Inspire** roll awakens a chosen feeling in the subject, so long as it is not in opposition to their current mood. A great success is enough to influence wholly disinterested individuals, and an extraordinary success may turn rivals into supporters.

Lore (Wits, Vocation)

> **He knew many histories and legends of long ago, of Elves and Men and the good and evil deeds of the Elder Days.**

Lore expresses a hero's love for learning, be it a fascination with descriptions of distant lands, or an interest in family genealogy. Whenever an action involves knowledge of some kind, a **Lore** roll is required. Heroes are considered to be knowledgeable in the traditions of their own people, and so the Loremaster should rarely require a player to make a **Lore** test for information regarding their character's culture, background or the area they originally come from.

Persuade (Wits, Personality)

> **Aragorn laughed. "Every man has something too dear to trust to another. But would you part an old man from his support? Come, will you not let us enter?"**

This skill allows a hero to apply his or her reasoning to convince another individual of an idea or course of action. It can be used to influence small groups of listeners, but only if used in an appropriate context, such as a common hall. An attempt at persuasion requires more time than other Personality skills, but can have a more lasting impact on other characters' actions. A high **Persuade** score denotes an uncommon eloquence, a love of speech and knowledge of its proper use and its effect on listeners. Wise men, advisers to chieftains and kings and their messengers all share this passion for the spoken word.

The successful use of the skill lets the hero convince his audience of the flaws in their current position. A great success convinces the subject of the quality of the hero's stance, while an extraordinary success may turn the subject into an ardent believer.

Riddle (Wits, Custom)

"A Hobbit waded out into the water and back; but I cannot say how long ago." "How then do you read this riddle?" asked Gimli.

Owing its name to the ancient Game, the **Riddle** skill represents a hero's ability to draw conclusions from seemingly unconnected scraps of information, by deduction, reasoning and intuition.

An adventurer also relies on **Riddle** whenever he is forced to talk about a subject but wants to conceal part of what he knows, for example to explain something about himself without revealing his true identity.

An accepted custom among many creatures, speaking in riddles is usually allowed among strangers meeting for the first time who want to speak guardedly. This skill is also used to gain helpful insight from a spoken or written riddle.

Travel (Heart, Movement)

The country was much rougher and more barren than in the green vale of the Great River in Wilderland on the other side of the range, and their going would be slow...

In the Third Age, the cities, villages and towns of Middle-earth are often separated by many leagues of wild or deserted areas. Roads that used to lead safely to distant realms now end in broken trails that go nowhere.

When the company needs to cover a distance across uncertain territory, including by boat, every companion is required to perform one or more tests using the **Travel** skill to avoid becoming weary too soon. While certainly the product of experience, the use of Travel benefits mostly from a hero's strength of spirit.

Search (Wits, Perception)

"Less welcome did the Lord Denethor show me then than of old, and grudgingly he permitted me to search among his hoarded scrolls and books."

Search is used when trying to find something by close examination. This skill may let a hero search a library to locate a piece of relevant information, look for concealed doors or hidden inscriptions, recognise a familiar face in a crowd or even search a suspected thief's clothing. One roll is required for each inspection of a small area, such as a room. **Search** rolls are generally initiated by the player rather than the Loremaster; **Awareness** is used to see if the characters passively notice something. A successful **Search** roll generally lets the characters find what they are looking for if it is to be found. A great or extraordinary success usually means the object is found more quickly. If an item is particularly well hidden, the Loremaster could decide that a higher level of success is required to uncover it.

Song (Body, Custom)

As they sang, the Hobbit felt the love of beautiful things made by hands and by cunning and by magic moving through him, a fierce and jealous love, the desire of the hearts of Dwarves.

Hobbits and Men, Elves and Dwarves, even Goblins and maybe Orcs: all the creatures of Middle-earth celebrate by playing music and singing songs. Great deeds and grim misfortunes are remembered in verse, and pleasant or even comic stories are told to ease spirits and find comfort.

Song is used to recite poems, sing songs or play instruments suitable to the character's culture. It can also be used to learn new works or create original compositions.

Stealth (Wits, Movement)

So silent was his going that smoke on a gentle wind could hardly have surpassed it, and he was inclined to feel a bit proud of himself as he drew near the lower door.

A hero resorts to **Stealth** whenever he needs, or is forced, to act in a furtive or secret way. The skill includes hiding, moving quietly and shadowing others. These activities

often rely on quickness and precision, so a stealthy hero combines practiced caution with the ability to judge the right moment to take a chance. Hunters, burglars, and solitary fighters use **Stealth** to prosper in their trade.

A successful **Stealth** roll indicates that the character has gone unnoticed, while a failure has almost certainly attracts unwanted attention.

A great or extraordinary success produces an outcome so flawless that it even be impossible to trace the hero's actions after the fact.

Weapon Skills

Adventurers roam a world where all too often the difference between life and death depends on an individual's ability with a weapon. A character's expertise in this field is represented by his *Weapon skills* and *Cultural Weapon skills*.

Weapon Skills Category (Body)

All Weapon skills and Cultural Weapon skills belong to the Body category, as using swords, spears, axes and even bows benefits the most from physical aptitude (and as such profit from a character's Body score when invoking an Attribute bonus).

Individual Weapon Skills

An ordinary Weapon skill represents a hero's proficiency in the use of a specific weapon.

In the game, a Weapon skill is always indicated with a specific weapon's name, in its singular form, such as Long sword.

A Weapon skill can only be used with the named weapon. A hero cannot use the skill to fight with a different weapon, no matter how similar it might be.

Cultural Weapon Skills

Most members of a cultural group receive basic martial instruction so that they can defend their homes in times of need, and many instruments of war are often adapted from tools otherwise used in daily life, such as bows and spears for hunting, large knives for skinning, and axes for woodcutting.

If a character's cultural background exposes him to a broad class of weapons, he is given the choice to add a Cultural Weapon skill to his set of abilities.

A Cultural Weapon skill is a collective skill, representing a level of ability in the use of a category of similar weapons, like all swords, all spears, all axes or all bows. Cultural Weapon skills are always indicated with a weapon's name, in its plural form, in brackets – for example, (Bows).

Proficiency in a Cultural Weapon skill is applied when the character is using any weapon belonging to that category. So, a character with (Axes) ♦♦ possesses two skill ranks while using any axe, be it a simple axe or a long-hafted axe.

Player-heroes can acquire Cultural Weapon skills only during character creation, and *never again during play*. Most culture descriptions offer the choice between selecting a Cultural Weapon skill or a <u>favoured</u> individual Weapon skill. It is up to the player to choose whether he wants to start with greater competence, or greater flexibility.

A Cultural Weapon skill cannot ever be selected as a favoured skill.

Weapon Skills List

The following table includes all the Weapons skills available to player-heroes. Beside each Cultural Weapon skill group are listed the weapons that it allows a character to use. Each weapon listed in a group is also available as an individual Weapon skill. Descriptions and characteristics of the various weapon types can be found on page 126, in the Gear section.

Cultural Weapon skill group	Weapon Skills
(Axes)	Axe, Great axe, Long-hafted axe
(Bows)	Bow, Great bow
(Spears)	Spear, Great spear
(Swords)	Sword, Short sword, Long sword
-	Dagger
-	Mattock

- Traits -

"(Elrond) ... was as noble and as fair in face as an Elf-lord, as strong as a warrior, as wise as a wizard, as venerable as a king of Dwarves, and as kind as summer."

The three Attributes – **Body**, **Heart** and **Wits** – give a good impression of the general make-up of a character, but they fall short in defining what exactly sets one individual apart from another. *Traits* are characteristics that add detail and nuance to a character, reflecting their preferences, interests and personality.

At various points during character creation (page 33), players are asked to select Distinctive Features and Traits to add to their character sheets. These features help players to picture their characters, and encourage good roleplaying by offering useful hooks to help players 'get in character.'

How Traits Work

Traits describe aspects of an adventurer's build, temper and capabilities that under certain circumstances can give them an advantage. There are different uses for Traits, but all are governed by the same principle:

The description of the Trait is essential. In other words, it must be reasonably plausible for someone with the features or qualities described by the Trait to fare better under the circumstances than an individual without them.

Traits are unranked, and cannot be improved.

Trait Etiquette

Players can invoke a Trait when they think it applies to the situation at hand (sometimes, the Loremaster himself may invoke one of a hero's Traits). To do so, they briefly explain why they think the Trait should give their character an advantage. If nobody at the table objects, then the player resolves his chosen course of action. If anyone finds the argument for invoking the Trait questionable, the Loremaster adjudicates.

The advantages conferred by Traits aren't powerful enough to unbalance the game, so players and Loremasters are advised to avoid discussing the validity of a Trait at length. A well-detailed or entertaining explanation adds to the enjoyment of the game, and should earn the player the benefit of the doubt. In all cases, the Loremaster's word is final.

Uses of Traits

There are three main reasons to invoke the use of a Trait: to trigger an *automatic action*, to propose an *unforeseen action*, or to gain an *Advancement point*.

Invoke a Trait to get an...*	Use
Automatic action	Invoke a Trait when using a Common skill to succeed automatically (an ordinary success).
Unforeseen action	Invoke a Trait to be allowed a die roll in a situation normally out of your control.
Advancement point	Invoke a Trait when you succeed at something that strongly reflects the feature described by the Trait.

*Players can invoke a Trait when they think it applies to a situation. If no one at the table objects, the Trait effect is applied; otherwise the Loremaster adjudicates.

Automatic Action

When a player is using one of his Common skills to make a roll, he may invoke a Trait possessed by his hero to ensure a successful performance.

If the Trait considered for the action is agreed to be relevant, the Loremaster may allow the acting player to score an automatic success without even rolling the dice. When a player invokes a Trait to get an automatic success he is considered to have unspectacularly achieved his goal: an ordinary success.

A group of adventurers has just overwhelmed a Goblin tower near Mount Gram. The dreary place now seems deserted, but the players want to use their Search skill to find any hidden ambushers. Janet points out that Rose, her Hobbit heroine, is 'Keen-eyed.' The Loremaster agrees, and lets Rose automatically spot grimy tracks leading to a dark corner of an underground chamber.

The Loremaster may agree with a Trait invocation to speed up play, especially if failing at the roll would not lead to dramatically relevant consequences, or if the action wasn't difficult. In some occasions, the Loremaster may ask his players whether they possess a pertinent Trait, in order to move the story on.

*The company has gained possession of a wooden casket found in a barrow, and the heroes are looking for a way to open it. The Loremaster announces that a simple **Craft** roll will do, and to speed up play asks whether any hero possesses an applicable Trait. Fíli the Dwarf is a Woodwright: the Loremaster is content, and lets Fíli open the casket without further ado.*

Unforeseen Action

Sometimes the Loremaster may decide that a situation doesn't allow a skill roll at all, due to events or factors out of the players' control. A player may invoke one of his Traits if he believes it should allow him a chance to intervene.

If the invocation is judged favourably, the Loremaster interrupts the narration to allow a standard action attempt.

After a short but fierce battle outside the gates of Mount Gram, Katherine, the Loremaster, is telling her players how a sneaky Goblin is escaping the battlefield after being left for dead and ignored. She rules that the Goblin is too far away for the players to intervene. Hugo, whose Dwarf is 'Cautious,' says that Fíli was certainly keeping an eye

on the wounded, exactly to avoid this problem. The group agrees, and the Loremaster lets Hugo test Fili's Awareness skill to see if he observed the Goblin in time.

Advancement Point

During the game, players earn Advancement points that will later be used to improve their characters' Common skill ratings (see page 194 for details); invoking a pertinent Trait improves the chances of a hero earning an Advancement point. When a hero succeeds in an action that strongly reflects one of his Traits, he may invoke the Trait to ask for an Advancement point.

If the Trait is agreed to be relevant, the player earns an Advancement point and checks the appropriate box.

*In the dead of night, Beran, a Beorning Warden, is dozing by the fire when he spies a Wild Wolf about to pounce on one of his sleeping companions. Not even pausing to grab his sword from beside him, he throws himself in harm's way with an **Athletics** roll and then successfully defends against the wolf's attack unarmed, giving his companions time to wake and dispatch the beast. The player, David, invokes Beran's 'Bold' Trait; the Loremaster agrees and awards Beran an Advancement point.*

Trait Descriptions

This section describes in brief all Traits offered in the game.

Traits are organised in two categories. *Specialities* are chosen along with a hero's culture, while *Distinctive Features* are selected as part of a hero's background (see **Part Two: Creating a Hero**, page 35).

Traits List:

Distinctive Features		Specialities
Adventurous	Merry	Beast-lore
Bold	Nimble	Boating
Cautious	Patient	Burglary
Clever	Proud	Cooking
Cunning	Quick of Hearing	Elven-lore
Curious	Reckless	Enemy-lore
Determined	Robust	Fire-making
Eager	Secretive	Fishing
Elusive	Small	Folk-lore
Energetic	Steadfast	Gardener
Fair	Stern	Herb-lore
Fair-spoken	Suspicious	Leechcraft
Fierce	Swift	Mountaineer
Forthright	Tall	Minstrelsy
Generous	True-hearted	Old Lore
Grim	Trusty	Region-lore
Gruff	Vengeful	Rhymes of Lore
Hardened	Wary	Shadow-lore
Hardy	Wilful	Smith-craft
Honourable	Wrathful	Smoking
Just		Stone-craft
Keen-eyed		Story-telling
Lordly		Swimming
Merciful		Woodwright

Specialities

Specialities represent the knacks, insights and 'craft secrets' handed down by different cultures over the years, giving heroes raised in those cultures an edge in given trades or activities. Specialities marked with an asterisk (*) are particularly useful to a specific calling.

Beast-lore
The forests, plains, marshes and mountain ranges of Wilderland teem with life. Your knowledge of beasts can provide information regarding an animal you are hunting, or tell you whether a cave you chose as refuge is likely to be the den of a dangerous creature.

Boating
You know how to handle a boat in the running waters of a river, or in the tricky currents of a lake.

Burglary*
This venerable talent includes pickpocketing, lock picking and, in general, any shadowy way to get hold of the possessions of others or access protected areas. Treasure-Hunters are generally skilled burglars.

Cooking
You know how to prepare food, from simple bread to your folk's special dishes.

Elven-lore
The memory of three ages of the world, Elven-lore preserves recollections of deeds and places lost to the Old lore of other races. You are also versed in the Ancient Tongue of the Elves beyond the Sea.

Enemy-lore*
Enemy-lore is not a single Speciality; you must select the race of enemies this Speciality applies to. This Trait gives you knowledge of the characteristics, habits, strengths and weaknesses of your chosen enemy; warriors and hunters often owe their survival to such knowledge. Slayers invariably dedicate themselves to the destruction of an enemy.

Fire-making
You know how to make a fire almost anywhere out of almost anything, if needs be.

Fishing
You are able to catch fish with net, spear, bow or line, or even with your hands, if you are given time to exercise your patient craft.

Folk-lore*
You possess some knowledge of the many traditional customs, beliefs and stories of the various communities

that compose the Free Peoples. Likely the result of your wanderings, this information may help you when dealing with strangers, letting you come up with some useful fact regarding their folk or a smattering of the appropriate language. Wanderers generally pick up this Trait during their time on the road.

Gardener

The tending of gardens has awoken in you a love for all growing things, and lets you recognise easily those plants and fruits that are wholesome and most nourishing.

Herb-lore

Whether used to identify a spice, a plant with curative properties or a blend of pipe-weed, herb-lore is a knowledge favoured by many races of Middle-earth. Among other uses, this Trait may prove helpful when cooking, or when preparing a healing salve.

Leechcraft

You are skilled, according to the tradition of your people, in the healing of wounds and sickness.

Minstrelsy

You have been trained in the arts of singing and playing one or more musical instruments, according to the tradition of the wandering minstrels. Your musical lore runs deeper than most, as you partake of the knowledge of musicians coming from foreign lands.

Mountaineer

You are familiar with the difficulties often encountered when crossing mountain passes, and with the ways of overcoming them.

Old lore

You are learned in the traditions and the rumour of bygone days. Your knowledge may derive from different sources, from stories heard around the fire to the dusty records of a chronicler.

Rhymes of Lore*

Rhymes of Lore are brief compositions in verse created by many cultures to remember significant facts from ancient history. Your knowledge of them can supplement a test of **Lore**, but is used especially in conjunction with any Custom skill (**Courtesy**, **Song** or **Riddle**). Scholars may credit much of their knowledge to rhymes.

Region-lore (Anduin-lore, Mirkwood-lore)

You may call upon your knowledge of an area when planning to traverse it as part of your journey.

Smoking

You have mastered the art of smoking the herb called *pipe-weed* or *leaf*, using a pipe of clay or wood. Practitioners of the art say it gives patience and clarity of mind, and helps them greatly to relax, concentrate or to converse peacefully with others.

Smith-craft

You love making things with hammer and anvil, and have spent many hours in front of the searing fire of the forge. You can judge the quality of most products of metalwork.

Stone-craft

Cutting rock to build works of stone such as walls, halls and towers is a precious skill, revered among the highest

forms of craftsmanship. You are able to discern the diverse qualities of the many building materials employed in Middle-earth, and to evaluate the use they are put to.

Story-telling

You are a masterful narrator of deeds and stories, able to weave plots and facts with passion and vividness.

Shadow-lore*

You have recognised that there is a shadowy thread unifying most of what is malicious, dark and terrible in Middle-earth, and that the thread is thickening year after year. A quality shared by the wise of the land, the truth behind this knowledge is getting plainer as the time passes. Wardens, committed to opposing the Shadow at every turn, collect this knowledge wherever they can.

Swimming

You are an accomplished swimmer, able to cross a swift stream, or to swim for an extended period.

Trading

You find yourself at ease when negotiating the buying and selling of items, or even information.

Tunnelling

You are accustomed to the difficulties of moving in passages dug under the earth; for example, you do not easily lose your sense of direction while underground.

Woodwright

The art of cutting and carving wood deftly to create useful tools or beautiful things has long been your trade. You can easily mend broken instruments and even weapons with wooden parts.

Distinctive Features

Distinctive Features define a character's personality traits and physical peculiarities, whether inborn or developed during their upbringing.

Adventurous

Your spirit is attracted by new experiences and challenges, especially when they seem perilous enough to put your mettle to the test.

Bold

You trust your capabilities to the point that you are not easily daunted, readily placing yourself in danger.

Cautious

You prefer a careful approach to all your endeavours, as you know that things can always go wrong.

Clever

You are ingenious and smart, quick to learn and able to make intuitive leaps.

Cunning

Your wit is sharp, and you are ready to use it to your advantage.

Curious

Your inquisitive nature is easily aroused by what is often not your concern.

Determined
When you set yourself a goal, you pursue it relentlessly.

Eager
When an endeavour appeals to your interest, you are filled with excitement and impatience.

Elusive
When you choose not to be seen, you can be as evasive as a fish in muddy waters.

Energetic
You are forceful, vital and enthusiastic, which often proves contagious.

Fair
You are considered beautiful by most people, even by those not belonging to your folk.

Fair-spoken
Your speech and manners are naturally pleasant and respectful.

Fierce
When provoked by deed or word, or when you deem it necessary, you let loose your savage side, demonstrating your aggressiveness.

Forthright
Your speech is plain and direct, as your words relate your thoughts without evasiveness.

Generous
You give with an open hand, always mindful of the need of others.

Grim
Your countenance is threatening, and betrays the harshness of your spirit.

Gruff
You often appear taciturn and surly; the truth is that you have little patience in dealing with others, and prefer to keep to yourself rather than indulge in conversations of little consequence. To some, your abruptness is a sign of your reliability.

Hardened
You show the mettle of a seasoned adventurer. Misfortune has taken its toll on you, or your eyes have already witnessed too many hard deeds.

Hardy
You can withstand long hours of toil and travel far without rest, or under extreme conditions.

Honourable
You abide by a set of principles that, among other things, require you to treat others (even you enemy) with respect, to keep your word when given, to bear yourself with dignity in any circumstance, and to seek to be fair in judgement.

Just
You are not easily deceived by appearances, and can usually tell right from wrong.

Keen-eyed
The keenness of your eyesight surpasses that of most folk.

Lordly
Your dignified bearing arouses feelings of reverence and respect in onlookers.

Merciful
You show forgiveness to enemies and are quick to pity, as the hurts or sadness of others deeply move you.

Merry
Your spirit is not easily discouraged, and you can find light in the darkest of shadows.

Nimble
Your movements are sure and agile.

Patient
You are slow to lose your temper, and can suffer fools, delays or even hardship without complaint.

Proud
You hold in high esteem all your feats and achievements, or those of your people.

Quick of Hearing
No sound escapes your attention.

Reckless
You often do not think about the consequences of your actions, daring to do things that others are afraid to even contemplate doing.

Robust
You are blessed with vigorous health, and seldom suffer from ailments or diseases.

Secretive
You do not easily share your thoughts, and prefer to conceal your intentions from the eyes of others, especially outsiders to your folk.

Small
You stand half the height of a grown man and are easily overlooked. This Trait is normally available to Hobbits choosing the 'Small Folk' Cultural Virtue — see page 100.

Steadfast
You are firm in temperament and belief, and usually base your actions solely on your own judgement.

Stern
You possess a severe nature, and express it in your behaviour, body language and speech.

Suspicious
You strongly believe in the old proverb that says that 'he who trusts not, is not deceived' and live by its words.

Swift
You move swiftly, and are quick to take action.

Tall
You tower above most of your folk.

True-hearted
You are sincere, and your words and actions show your honest intentions.

Trusty
You are reliable and faithful, and your word is a valid pledge.

Vengeful
You do not forget slights and insults, not to mention betrayals. You are prone to holding grudges or actively seeking satisfaction.

Wary
You are always mindful of your surroundings, and observant of the speech and behaviour of strangers.

Wilful
Your confidence in your own judgement makes you deaf to all counsel but your own.

Wrathful
You are easily angered, and when seriously provoked you cannot contain your fury.

- Valour - and Wisdom

"There is more in you of good than you know, child of the kindly West. Some courage and some wisdom, blended in measure."

The heroic stature of an adventurer can be measured in different ways. *The One Ring* uses two gauges to show how the character has grown over the course of the game: Wisdom and Valour. These scores increase as heroes overcome difficulties that others do not dare to even challenge; they are profoundly different to the other characteristics, both in what they represent and in their influence on the game.

When a hero is first created, his player assigns values to both Wisdom and Valour, setting one at 1 and the other at 2 as he prefers. Later, players may spend earned Experience to raise the two ranks. Which score they favour has many consequences in the long run, as it will alter a hero's fundamental abilities and play a big role in determining his identity.

Wisdom

A character's knowledge of his own capabilities, his self-confidence and capacity for good judgement changes and improves with struggles and strife. A characteristic with deeply personal implications, a hero's rank in Wisdom also determines the stature of the hero in the eyes of those that prize these qualities.

When Wisdom is chosen over Valour when spending Experience points, it suggests that the hero's adventures are affecting him subtly but profoundly. Starting as a more or less ingenuous individual with an adventurous spirit, the hero can achieve the maturity and sagacity of the Wise.

Valour

Valour is a measure of a character's courage, as tempered by dangerous deeds. A man of valour is willing to place himself in danger for the safety of others. In a time where new threats arise each day, courage is highly prized, and a valiant adventurer is often esteemed above all other individuals. For this reason, a hero's rank in Valour also reflects the level of renown he attained as a doer of great deeds.

When a player decides to favour Valour over Wisdom, his hero's actions, not his judgement, will tend to prove his status in the eyes of others. From the lowliest start as a wandering adventurer, a hero might one day equal the repute and respect earned by a famous champion or king.

How Wisdom and Valour Work

Valour and Wisdom are ranked from 1 to 6, reflecting the gradual transformation of a novice adventurer into a veteran hero. The characteristics affects the game in

several ways: a character's Wisdom or Valour might affect social interactions, provide a character with special abilities and superior equipment, and let a hero resist dangerous influences, such as corruption.

Encounters

A particularly wise or valiant hero is more likely to provoke a positive reaction from others. When adventurers are involved in any form of social interaction, the Loremaster takes into consideration a hero's rank in either of the two ratings. Usually, the Loremaster considers which score is more important in the eyes of the character the hero is interacting with: a warlike chieftain may favour Valour, for example, while a Wizard will almost certainly prize Wisdom.

Special Abilities

Starting from rank 2, when a hero gains a new rank in either Wisdom or Valour, he receives a boon, a special ability. The special abilities granted by Wisdom are called Virtues, while those bestowed with ranks of Valour are called Rewards; both are presented in the next section.

A newly created hero starts the game either with his first Reward or his first Virtue, depending in which of the characteristics he set at level 2 at character creation.

Tests relying on Valour and Wisdom

When facing the challenge of a dangerous fight, a long trek in difficult terrain, or another sort of arduous task, a hero relies upon his Endurance. If this doesn't prove to be enough, he can draw upon his reserves of Hope. But some threats are more insidious, and these can be opposed only by good judgement or plain courage.

When characters are confronted by the temptations of the Shadow, like the thirst for power or gold, they will have to put their Wisdom to the test to avoid becoming corrupt (Corruption tests). If they are set against a menace capable of inspiring blind fear, they will have to prove their Valour (Fear tests).

Tests using Valour or Wisdom are very much like any other test, made using the Feat die and a number of Success dice equal to the rating possessed in the relevant characteristic.

Attribute bonus (Heart)

Players may invoke a **Heart** Attribute bonus to modify their Fear and Corruption test results.

- Virtues - and Rewards

"...the Dwarf alone wore openly a short shirt of steel-rings, for Dwarves make light of burdens; and in his belt was a broad-bladed axe."

There are many things that may reveal an experienced adventurer. It may be his weather-beaten look, the quality of his weaponry or the grim determination that surfaces when he sets himself to a difficult task. Everything about a veteran is the result of many years of struggle. This is particularly apparent when an adventurer's uncommon Virtues and accumulated Rewards are taken into consideration.

Complementing his skills and Traits, a character's Virtues and Rewards describe the qualities that truly turn an adventurer into a hero. Virtues are aptitudes that come naturally to a member of a given race, or abilities that arise through time and practice, while Rewards are gifts from grateful lords and generous chieftains, trappings of respect that valiant men earn accomplishing memorable deeds.

How Virtues Work

"But I say: let a ploughman plough, but choose an otter for swimming, and for running light over grass and leaf or over snow – an Elf."

Of all the options offered to players, the choice of Virtues is probably the one that allows for the easiest individualisation of a hero. They represent the special qualities of a people, or talents practised until they become second nature.

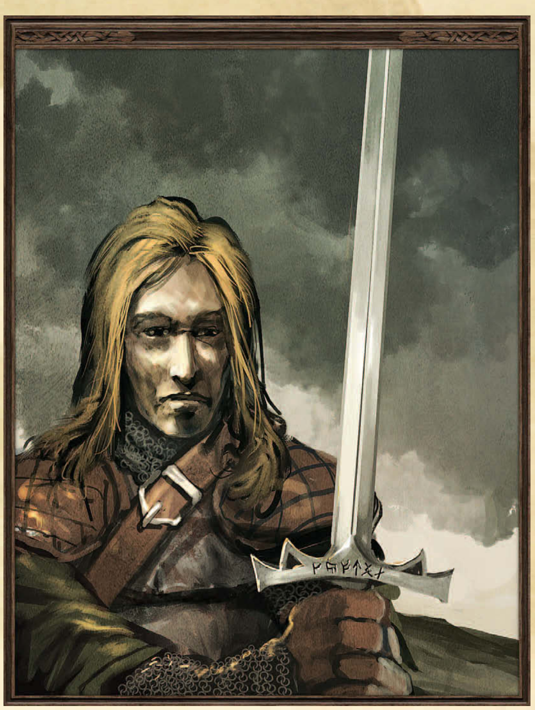
Every time a hero's Wisdom score goes up one level – including at character creation, if he begins with a Wisdom of 2 – he receives a Virtue.

Virtues distinguish themselves from other characteristics in their diversity. All are beneficial, but often apply only under strict conditions. As these requisites are as varied as the effects of the Virtues themselves, players are advised to read each Virtue description carefully, to understand when best to use it. There are two types of Virtues – *Masteries* and *Cultural Virtues*.

Masteries are six special abilities that any hero can develop; players can select any one Mastery when their character is entitled to a new Virtue (the six Masteries available to all players are described on page 103).

Cultural Virtues are the secrets of the dwellers of Middle-earth, from the proverbial stubbornness of Dwarves to the subtle magic of Elves. There are five different Cultural Virtues for every culture presented in this guide. Their descriptions are presented at the following pages:

Bardings page 104
Beornings page 105
Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain page 107
Elves of Mirkwood page 108
Hobbits of The Shire page 110
Woodmen of Wilderland page 111



Masteries

These talents can be acquired by adventurers from any culture. Each Mastery can be acquired more than once by the same character.

Confidence

Overcoming difficulties has hardened your spirit, and at the same time renewed your faith in a brighter future.

Raise your maximum Hope rating by 2 points. When you choose this mastery, set your Hope score again to its maximum rating.

Dour-handed

When you throw a weapon or bend your bow, your hand is steady and your aim is sure.

Raise your ranged Damage rating by 1.

Expertise

You have practised a skill until it has become as natural as breathing.

You can choose a new favoured skill (either a Common skill or a Weapon skill).

Fell-handed

You have learned to put all your strength into your blows in hand-to-hand battle.

Raise your close combat Damage rating by 1.

Gifted

Adventuring is honing your inborn talents.

Raise one of your favoured Attributes (see page 85) by one.

Resilience

Your determination and stamina have improved through hardship and toil.

Raise your maximum Endurance rating by 2 points. When you choose this Mastery, set your Endurance score again to its maximum rating.

Cultural Virtues - Bardings

The Bardings are Northmen of the noblest blood, valiant men with a tradition of powerful kings. Considered lost for many long years, their ancient heritage has been tempered anew in dragon-fire, and is today once again in capable hands. The same qualities that were once doubted or even derided by lesser men will now be put to good use by their rightful King.

Birthright

> **"Bard is not lost!" he cried. "He dived from Esgaroth, when the enemy was slain. I am Bard, of the line of Girion; I am the slayer of the Dragon!"**

You are a rightful heir to an illustrious household that was powerful in the city of Dale. To many, your family history and fortune destine you for greatness, as they did your ancestors.

Raise your standard of living from Prosperous to Rich; from now on, your Standing rating doesn't decrease during a Fellowship phase.

If, during play, you receive a Wound that would normally kill you (a coup de grâce or a killing blow) you can choose between the following options:

1. You die, and let your direct descendant inherit the Birthright Virtue as an additional Cultural blessing (a free Virtue at character creation), *or*

2. You are saved by some miraculous circumstance that leaves you wounded but alive. You then reset your Standing rating to 0, as you are then presumed dead by your own folk. You can do this only once, and never again.

Fierce Shot

> **The great bow twanged...the arrow smote and vanished, barb, shaft and feather...**

You have learnt to bend your bow so fiercely that you hear its string crack like a whip when it sends its arrows flying.

When you are using a great bow your ranged Damage bonus is based on your favoured Body score.

King's Men

But there was still a company of archers that held their ground among the burning houses.

The former glory of the proud hosts of Dale has been restored by King Bard, and so the martial discipline that once made the city powerful is again imparted to all young men and women alike, lest the city be caught unprepared by assailants. You have sworn to protect the city and its king with your life, and in return you are regularly trained by the most expert swordsmen and bowmen of the realm.

Raise your maximum Endurance score by 3 points. Additionally, from now on the cost of raising your skill rating in Sword, Long Sword, Spear or Great Bow is lowered by 1 Experience point at each level.

Swordmaster

...and beside them came the men of the Lake with long swords.

A skilled warrior can use his sword to deflect blows that would have otherwise hit their mark. You have learnt to fight defensively using your weapon to full advantage.

When you are fighting in a Defensive stance, your get a bonus to your Parry equal to the Encumbrance rating of your sword (either a sword or a long sword).

Woeful Foresight

"You are always foreboding gloomy things!" said the others. "Anything from floods to poisoned fish. Think of something cheerful!"

Many citizens of ancient Dale found themselves blessed – or cursed – by a sort of foresight following Smaug's destruction of the city. As a descendant of one of these bloodlines, you share this gift.

Sometimes, you feel a sense of foreboding that warns you of impending catastrophe and other gloomy events. But the future is always uncertain, and sometimes what you foresee never materialises.

Raise your maximum Hope score by 1 point. Additionally, once every Adventuring phase, you may invoke your power of foresight. When this happens, the Loremaster should give you a relevant piece of information regarding negative events likely to occur during your current adventure. If no such information is available – or the Loremaster prefers not to divulge it – at the start of the next Fellowship phase, he must award you 1 Experience point instead (your foresight contained a more intimate message, leading to a sudden bout of insight or deeper understanding).

Your foresight manifests in many forms: it can be a hazy vision, a recurring and enigmatic dream, or a cryptic message borne by a talking bird.

Cultural Virtues – Beornings

Due to the extraordinary nature of their leader, the Beornings are said to possess all sorts of queer and dangerous qualities. Some of these Virtues seem to bear a resemblance to the fabled powers of the skin-changer himself, and could be attributed to the chieftain's teachings. What is certain is that nobody questions the fierceness with which the Beornings defend their chosen territory, sparing no weapon at their disposal.

Brothers to Bears

I once saw him sitting all alone on the top of the Carrock at night watching the moon sinking towards the Misty Mountains, and I heard him growl in the tongue of bears...

Beorn has taught you to heed the call of an ancient animal heritage. When the moon is high in the sky and the world is fully revealed in an argentine glow, no sound escapes your ears, as the night speaks to you in the language of the Wild.

Raise your maximum Endurance score by 3 points. Additionally, from now on your sight and hearing are greatly enhanced at night, and let you see or hear better

than under the light of the sun, and at a greater distance: when you make a roll using a Perception skill at night you always add your Attribute score to the result, as if enjoying an Attribute bonus.

Night-goer

As the light faded, Bilbo thought he saw away to the right, or to the left, the shadowy form of a great bear prowling along in the same direction.

At night you can slip into a dream-like state, and leave your body in spirit form to swiftly travel along the tracks made by animals across the length and breadth of Wilderland.

In this state, you can spend a point of Hope to explore an area within three days of travel, until sunrise wakes you.

Your spirit form takes the appearance of a full-grown bear. It is visible to onlookers, and leaves tracks on the ground. While you are outside your body, any action you attempt is resolved using your Attributes and skills as usual, but any strenuous activity causing the loss of Endurance wakes you up. Any harm suffered while travelling in spirit form is transferred to your body at the moment of awakening.

Skin-Coat

...nothing could withstand him, and no weapon seemed to bite upon him.

Tales say that a warrior's own courage will turn steel and iron better than the smith's hammer-work.

When you are hit by a Piercing blow in combat, you may choose to reduce your Endurance score by a number of points before rolling for Protection, to lower the Injury rating of the blow by an equal number.

Great Strength

Standing near was a huge man with a thick black beard and hair, and great bare arms and legs with knotted muscles.

As long as you can move freely while fighting, you may profit from great strength and nimbleness. If the total Encumbrance of your carried gear is equal to or less than 12, when you are fighting in a close combat stance, you receive a bonus of +3 to your Parry score.

Twice-baked Honey Cakes

The making of these was one of his secrets; but honey was in them, as in most of his foods...

The honey-cakes of the Beornings are legendary among travellers. You can march far by eating just a little of them, and they are much more pleasant than cram, the waybread that Dale-men make for journeys in the wild. You have been shown the secret of baking such cakes, and can prepare them for the consumption of all members of your company.

Raise your company's Fellowship rating by 1 point. Additionally, when you are on a journey, you and your fellow travellers reduce the difficulty of all your Fatigue tests by a value equal to your Wisdom rating.

Cultural Virtues - Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain

The reserved and surly character of Dwarves has often been misinterpreted by others as hostility or untrustworthiness. Their dealings with Elves have ended in disaster at least once, and Men long feared that these reclusive creatures were under the Shadow's influence. Moreover, their secretiveness regarding their ways and crafts has led other folks to believe that Dwarves possess strange and uncanny powers, confusing their formidable abilities with dark sorcery.

Broken Spells

> ***The Dwarves of yore made mighty spells,***
> ***While hammers fell like ringing bells.***

You have been taught some long-remembered fragments of old spells that retain power to this day. Some require you to cut or engrave a Runic inscription, usually in stone or metal, or sometimes carved in wood. You can learn a total of three spells: *Secrecy*, *Prohibition and Exclusion*, and *Opening and Shutting*.

You must choose one spell when you first select this Virtue, and you may learn a new one by spending 1 Experience point as your undertaking during a Fellowship phase.

Spells of Opening and Shutting

This fragment must be recited in front of a door or gate, to magically lock it, or recited backwards to open it if locked. The spell has no effect on a door that has been blocked by magic and now requires a particular word to open it, but might work if the entrance was barred by the same type of magic. The spell starts working as soon as you have finished reciting it.

Spells of Prohibition and Exclusion

This Runic inscription was usually placed on gates and on doors, to protect an area from unwanted visitors.

You may carve these signs on a rock or on the bark of a tree within the perimeter of your camp, and their power will wake you at the first sign of danger. Carve the runes and go to sleep. You will immediately awaken if any threatening presence approaches.

Spells of Secrecy

Carve these runes on a concealed door, personal hiding place or object, and it will be noticed only if someone searches for it with great care. These signs are invisible to the untrained eye as long as the power within them is still working; they can only be seen and read when the spell is spent or broken.

The object concealed by the spell can only be found with an extraordinary Search result, unless the searcher is a Dwarf (in which case a simple success is enough).

Durin's Way

> ***That was the beginning of the War of the Dwarves and the Orcs, which was long and deadly, and fought for the most part in deep places beneath the earth.***

You have been taught how to defend yourself while fighting under the surface of the earth. You know how to exploit corners, darkness and other natural obstacles to your advantage.

When fighting underground, your Parry rating receives a bonus of +3.

Old Hatred

"Baruk Khazâd! Khazâd ai-mênu!" An axe swung and swept back. Two Orcs fell headless.

When you face your kin's most hated enemies you feel the strength of your ancestors, slain by the foul hands of Orcs, flowing impetuously in your veins.

When you are fighting Orcs and their kind using hand-to-hand weapons, add a bonus of +3, or your Valour rating (whichever is higher), to the total Endurance loss inflicted by each of your blows.

Ravens of the Mountain

There used to be great friendship between them and the people of Thrór...

You have befriended a raven of the ancient breed living around the Lonely Mountain. Long-lived and able to speak the common tongue, these birds are often wise companions, bound to your kin by ties of old friendship. Many times in the past they have provided invaluable help by gathering news or sending messages for your folk.

If you are in Wilderland, your raven friend is never far away. You can sound a call and summon him to your presence in a matter of minutes. As soon as he joins you, you may command him.

Usually, the raven is eager to please you, but an unusual or less than reasonable request might put their faithfulness to the test and require a **Courtesy** roll against a TN of 14. The raven does not ask for anything in return, but repeated requests over a short time might sooner or later lead him to feel entitled to compensation (his precise terms are up to the Loremaster, and might lead to interesting story developments).

The time needed for a raven to complete the errand depends on the request, on the distance to be covered, and on the complexity of the assignment. A raven flies at an average speed of 30 miles per hour (enough to cross the whole width of Mirkwood in one day)

The following list shows some of the possible errands you can assign to your winged ally, but should in no way limit your inventiveness.

Bring tidings: a raven is always well informed about the latest events concerning the Wild, and is eager to report them.

Carry messages: the raven can deliver messages anywhere in the region, passing its content to others of his kin.

Investigate: the raven can be sent to gather information on a specific subject. It must be something naturally accessible to one of its kind.

Carry food: a raven might be persuaded to carry some food if able to steal or borrow it from a location within a day's flight.

The Stiff Neck of Dwarves

"...yet he was ever a Dwarf with a stiff neck."

Dwarves are deemed to be stubborn and unyielding. Their natural inclination to persevere against all odds is strengthened by the taint of the Shadow.

You add a number equal to your current Shadow score to all your rolls involving the use of a Common skill (with the exception of all Custom skills).

Cultural Virtues - Elves of Mirkwood

Elves and magic are almost synonymous to most inhabitants of Middle-earth. The word itself invokes images of their grace, the products of their craft, and their unearthly beauty. But the ancient tribes from which many Wood-elves descend never went over the Sea to grow fairer and more learned, and devoted their arts to devising cunning ways of deceiving the Enemy and its servants. This is probably why they are accounted by some to be among the 'lesser kindreds,' and are deemed to be more dangerous and less wise.

Deadly Archery

...their small knives... would have been of no use against the arrows of the Elves that could hit a bird's eye in the dark.

Most members of your kin possess a natural talent for hitting the mark when using their bows. You seem to possess that quality yourself, as your arrows find their target with uncanny precision.

When you spend a point of Hope to invoke an Attribute bonus on a ranged attack roll using a bow, you receive an additional bonus equal to your basic Heart score.

Elvish Dreams

"...he could sleep, if sleep it could be called by Men, resting his mind in the strange paths of elvish dreams, even as he walked open-eyed in the light of this world."

You have learnt to recover from your exertions while engaging in a repetitive task, like walking, or rowing in a boat.

At the end of a day of activity, you recover a number of Endurance points equal to your Wisdom rank. If you then take a prolonged rest, you recover normally.

Shadow Bane

The Elves were the first to charge. Their hatred for the Goblins is cold and bitter.

Your folk have suffered grievous losses during many wars against the Shadow. Even the passing of centuries cannot quell the bitter hate that your kindred harbour for the Enemy.

When you are fighting in a Forward stance (see page 172) against servants of the Shadow (including Spiders, Orcs, Trolls and Evil Men), add one Success die to all your attack rolls (up to a maximum of 6).

The Speakers

"Only I hear the stones lament them: deep they delved us, fair they wrought us, high they builded us; but they are gone."

You have learnt how to communicate with almost everything, from any living being to grass, stone and water. This means, for example, that you can hear from the stones in a path who trod it recently, or sing to soothe an unquiet animal. To use this gift you must make an appropriate skill roll. Which skill you use depends on what you are trying to do and is at the Loremaster's discretion, but here are a few examples: to interpret the words of the stones in a path requires a roll of **Riddle**; to restrain a scared horse requires a roll of **Song**; to listen to the voice of a river requires a roll of **Insight**.

Wood-elf Magic

Though their magic was strong, even in those days they were wary.

You are mastering what mortals might call 'Elf-magic.' You learn how to fling a *Stinging Arrow* when you first select this Virtue. You may later master the making of *Elf-lights* as your undertaking, and spending one Experience point during a Fellowship phase; finally, you discover the secret of *Enchanted Sleep* by spending another Experience point as another undertaking during a later Fellowship phase.

Stinging Arrow

You can make an arrow flicker as if with a magical fire, making it fly true.

Spend a point of Hope when you let loose an arrow and it will fly up to twice its normal range, OR spend a point of Hope after a successful ranged attack using a bow or great bow to produce an automatic Piercing blow.

Elf-lights

You know how to make a torch or a lamp burn with a peculiar flame that attracts all mortals who see it.

Spend a point of Hope to light a torch, or a lamp. Any speaking creature who sees its flame must try to get near it by any means possible, or spend a point of Hope (or Hate) to ignore the spell effect.

You may snuff out the light at will, even from a distance, either to extinguish the flame quickly and quietly, or to cause it to flare suddenly to blind and confuse your enemies (those standing close to the flare fight as if Weary for one round of combat).

Enchanted Sleep
Having used an Elf-light to attract an unwary victim, you can enchant him into slumber.

You may snuff out the Elf-light when someone enters the area illuminated by the light. The first living creature with an Attribute level lower than 6 that enters the area drops immediately into an Enchanted Sleep.

Cultural Virtues - Hobbits of the Shire

Hobbits rarely display Virtues considered to be heroic by other races, which partly explains their absence from history as written by Elves and Men. But to the discerning eye, these merry fellows reveal subtle qualities, often excelling in fields where stronger individuals might fail. It is another sign showing that the world is changing, and it is said that small hands will one day move the wheels of the world...

Art of Disappearing

> **There is little or no magic about them, except the ordinary everyday sort which helps them to disappear quietly and quickly when large stupid folk like you and me come blundering along...**

You have learnt to choose exactly the right moment to turn away from the attention of others, sometimes unconsciously anticipating the need to disappear.

At the start of an episode where the location you are in is entered by newcomers, and if the location offers even the smallest opportunity to hide or sneak silently away, you can spend a point of Hope to disappear. You could slip into a convenient shadowy corner, a thick patch of undergrowth, a crowded room, a sharp bend in a passage underground or any other potentially concealing feature – the final decision on whether there is available concealment lies with the Loremaster.

No roll is needed, and you are considered to be present in the area, but unseen to the eyes of the interlopers. If the newly arrived individuals knew that you were present, it is as if you actually disappeared into thin air. You can at any moment choose to reveal yourself, simply stepping into the open from your hiding place.

Brave at a Pinch

> **Then something Tookish woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword instead of a walkingstick.**

One of the Wise once said that you have to put a Hobbit in a tight place before you find out what is in them (the problem being that they try their best to avoid tight places...).

When you spend a point of Hope to invoke an Attribute bonus, you additionally cancel all penalties enforced from being Weary for that action.

Fair Shot

> **As a boy he used to practise throwing stones at things, until rabbits and squirrels, and even birds, got out of his way as quick as lightning if they saw him stoop.**

You have spent a great deal of your time practising with all sorts of throwing games, and your accuracy is exceptional.

When you make a ranged attack, you can roll the Feat die twice and keep the best result.

Tough in the Fibre

...they can move very quietly, and hide easily, and recover wonderfully from falls and bruises...

When you are allowed to take a prolonged rest in a safe place (not 'on the road'), you recover your health at a prodigious pace, whether you are hurt or simply tired.

If you are Wounded and your injury hasn't been treated you recover 2 Endurance points; if you are Wounded and your injury has been treated successfully, you recover 4 Endurance points; if you are uninjured, you recover 3 Endurance points plus your favoured Heart rating.

When you are travelling, you recover normally (the reduced recovery rates found at page 163 do not apply to you).

Small Folk

Pippin stabbed upwards, and the written blade of Westernesse pierced through the hide and went deep into the vitals of the Troll, and his black blood came gushing out.

You have learnt how to gain an advantage in a fight from being smaller than most of your opponents.

When you are being attacked in close combat by a creature bigger than you (very often), your basic Parry rating is calculated using your favoured Wits score, instead of your basic Wits.

Outside of combat, you gain the 'Small' Trait, and can invoke it using the usual Trait rules (see the Traits section on page 92 for details).

Cultural Virtues – Woodmen of Wilderland

The qualities that let the Woodmen clans survive in one of the most dangerous corners of Wilderland are subtle and diverse, and all have been put to the test during years of constant struggle against the darkness of Dol Guldur. The Woodmen have a worthy friend in Radagast, the Brown Wizard, and the mysterious wise man has passed many small secrets to those who would listen to his counsel.

A Hunter's Resolve

On and on he led them, tireless and swift...

You have learnt to tap into the inner strength of the indefatigable and relentless hunter.

Once per day you may spend a Hope point to recover a number of Endurance points equal to your favoured Heart rating.

Herbal Remedies

Radagast... has much lore of herbs and beasts...

Mirkwood is shunned by many men and beasts, yet its shadowy eaves are still good for the growing of herbs. You are learning the ancient craft of concocting salves and herbal remedies from your village elders and wise-women.

You learn to recognise which herbs qualify as *Fragrant Weeds* when you first select this Virtue, and can master the secrets of *Poison Remedies* as your undertaking during a Fellowship phase, and spending 1 Experience point.

Fragrant Weeds

You have developed the habit of chewing some herbs and roots that are said to bring vigour back into a man's limbs. As long as you are in a wild area, you can collect enough herbs for their effect to be noticeable:

When your Endurance rating drops to equal or below your Fatigue score for the first time, you are not yet considered Weary. You become Weary only when your Endurance drops again.

Poison Remedies

You can find the necessary ingredients to concoct a drink that, when ingested, will help a victim shake off the effects of Spider-poison, or to prepare a salve that when applied to a wound or a bruise will neutralise the action of Orc-poison.

Spend a point of Hope and roll **Craft** against a TN of 16 to neutralise the effects of a single poison type on all members of your company.

Hound of Mirkwood

"...in trotted... several large, long-bodied grey dogs."

Your folk have always delighted in training great, long-jawed hounds, stronger than wolves. You have chosen a wolfhound of Wilderland to accompany you in your wanderings and the faithfulness of your hound reinforces your spirit.

Raise your maximum Hope score by 2 points.

But such trust comes at a price: a Hound of Mirkwood is a valorous and noble beast, always ready to take the side of his human companion during combat.

When you are engaged in battle, if an attack aimed at you produces an 👁 result, the blow hits and automatically Wounds the Hound instead (in place of the effects of a normal hit). You may prevent this by taking the automatic Wound yourself (you cannot roll for Protection). A Wounded Hound is put out of combat for the remainder of the scene, and will return at your side at the start of the next session only if you succeed in a **Healing** roll with a TN of 16. If you fail, the Hound will not recover until the next Fellowship phase.

The training of a Hound of Mirkwood is an endeavour in itself; the teachings of Radagast have turned this craft into an art. When you first choose this Virtue, your hound learns to assist you with one Common skill as described under *Support* below, without paying the Experience point cost. You can train him to *Support* additional skills, as well as to assist you in combat, as a separate undertaking during later Fellowship phases, as follows:

Support

You can train your Hound to assist you in one activity. A dog can be trained to support you when making any one of the following skill rolls: **Awe**, **Awareness**, **Explore** or **Hunting**. It takes a Fellowship phase and 1 Experience point to teach your dog to complete an additional task.

When you are making a roll using one of the skills imparted to your dog, you may roll the Feat die twice, and keep the best result.

Harass Enemy

You may spend a Fellowship phase and 2 Experience points to teach your animal companion to harass your opponent when fighting at close quarters.

When you are fighting alongside your animal companion, your immediate adversary in close combat is always considered to be Weary.

Protect

You may spend a Fellowship phase and 1 Experience point to teach your Hound to steadfastly defend you when you withdraw to attack your enemies with a ranged weapon.

If you want to fight in a Rearward stance, your dog protects you, counting as a companion fighting in a close combat stance (so that you need only another companion in close combat). Additionally, you are allowed to choose a Rearward stance even if the total number of enemies is more than twice the number of companions (up to three times) — see Combat on page 173).

Natural Watchfulness

The wood was full of the rumour of him, dreadful tales even among beasts and birds.

Whether travelling, exploring or even resting, the behaviour of animals can communicate much to those who know how to interpret the signs. It could be the sudden silence of a bird, or the distant rustling of a beast in flight. You have learnt to recognise which sounds and sights reveal the approaching of enemies, and to read much from your surroundings.

When you are outside, you upgrade the quality of all your successful **Awareness** rolls by one level, turning a success into a great success, or a great success into an extraordinary one. Additionally, once during each day, you may make an **Explore** roll with a TN of 14 to gather information regarding the area surrounding you, as if you were observing it from a vantage point (the top of a tall tree, a small hill).

A Woodman possessing Natural Watchfulness, finding himself in a clearing deep in the woods, might roll ***Explore*** *to notice that a forest stream passes nearby, and that a cave opens a few hundred metres to the east.*

Staunching Song

"They are... singing many songs, after the manner of the children of Men before the Dark Years."

This song has been taught to the worthiest members of your clan since your people first descended along the banks of the Great River. Its tune echoes Elven songs from a time of war and weapons, and its precious knowledge has been passed with great care from one generation to the next. Singing its words can reduce the loss of a warrior's life-blood to a trickle, letting it flow back to the heart.

At the end of a fight you may roll **Song** against TN 14. On a successful roll, you recover a number of additional Endurance points equal to your Wisdom rating, twice your Wisdom rating if the roll was a great success, or three times your Wisdom rating if the roll was an extraordinary success. Additionally, if you have been Wounded, your injury is considered to have been treated successfully (see the section on Life and Death on page 131). You may spend a point of Hope to do the same for another member of your company.

How Rewards Work

Háma knelt and presented to Théoden a long sword in a scabbard clasped with gold and set with green gems. "Here, lord, is Herugrim, your ancient blade..."

In a world of growing darkness, trade is mostly limited to small areas, and is often practised only among trusted individuals. High-quality weapons, especially, are considered priceless, and are guarded as treasured belongings. Traditionally, items of unusual craftsmanship are buried with their owners. As such, finely crafted weapons or suits of armour cannot be purchased, but may – rarely – be awarded for service or heroic deeds.

Improving the Standard of Equipment

At the beginning of the game, each player selects his adventurer's possessions. Starting equipment includes weapons, a suit of armour, and possibly a helm or shield, all at an ordinary level of quality, with the characteristics listed in the tables on pages 123 and 126. Heroes receive superior gear when they gain new ranks in Valour.

Every time a hero's Valour score goes up one level – including at character creation, if he begins with a Valour of 2 – he receives a Reward. A Reward entitles a player to bestow a new special quality upon one equipment item.

Rewards may be tributes given to the hero by his own folk or family, or by a munificent lord honouring an adventurer by letting him choose a weapon or a suit of armour from his personal armoury. There are two types of Rewards – Qualities and Cultural Rewards.

Qualities and Cultural Rewards

Qualities are generic enhancements that affect a single characteristic of any item.

Players can select any one Quality from among those listed when their character is entitled to a new Reward, and can apply its effects on any weapon or suit of armour they use. See below for the descriptions and game mechanics of Qualities.

Cultural Rewards are more specific improvements, typical of the military traditions of each folk. There are three different Cultural Rewards for every culture presented in the game: a player can select one of them when his character is entitled to a new Reward. Each Cultural Reward may be taken only once. Cultural Rewards may be combined with Qualities, where appropriate.

The description of each culture's exclusive Cultural Rewards are presented at the following pages:

Bardings	page 116
Beornings	page 116
Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain	page 117
Elves of Mirkwood	page 117
Hobbits of the Shire	page 118
Woodmen of Wilderland	page 118

One or More Items?

Rewards are upgrades enhancing the characteristics of the equipment carried by a hero. It is up to a player to decide whether a Reward represents a change in their existing weapon or armour, the discovery of a previously unknown property, or an entirely new item.

This is particularly important as far as Cultural Rewards are concerned, as they represent a gift received from a character's own folk.

The company of heroes have made their way to Rivendell, and are enjoying a respite from their labours. Three of the players have recently raised their Valour scores, and decide the Fellowship phase is an excellent time to select their Rewards.

Dwalin son of Dori hands his father's cracked, battered shield to the Elves, which, when returned is beautifully restored, with a fine steel rim fixed to the edge (adding the Reinforced Quality to his existing shield). Míriel is presented by her hosts with one of the finely crafted bows of her people (a new Woodland Bow). Andwise Burrows, meanwhile, having struggled with a suit of heavy armour for weeks, learns how to remove some of the sections and adjust the straps, making the armour considerably more comfortable (discovering the suit's Cunning Make Quality).

Whatever their choice, players should integrate the decisions into their stories, telling the tale of how one hero received a gift, or another had his equipment improved, during the Fellowship phase. If the player anticipates an increase in Valour before the end of an Adventuring phase, he could discuss with the Loremaster the possibility of making the Reward a part of the end of the current adventure. A Lord of the Free Peoples making a ceremonial award to the hero at the culmination of an adventure is a highly satisfying note to end on.

Availability

Upgraded items enjoy a certain degree of 'plot immunity'; they should never be lost, broken or in any way be taken from a character. If a Loremaster or his players do not like this level of abstraction in their games, then a hero should at least receive a new object of equivalent worth as a replacement for a lost item. After all, a Reward is a token of recognition of a hero's renown, and that cannot be taken away!

Qualities

There are several types of Qualities, allowing players to raise the effectiveness of their armour, helm, shield or weapon. Most Qualities may be applied more than once to the same piece of gear, unless the upgrade is specifically highlighted as unique.

Each single piece of equipment can receive a maximum of 3 Qualities in total. An item with 1 Quality is considered to be of fine make, one with 2 Qualities is a superior piece of equipment, and one with 3 Qualities is an object of worth.

Olvard from Dale has just reached rank 3 in Valour, and is entitled to a new gear upgrade. He already possesses a fine sword with a Keen blade; he decides to give his sword

Naming Weapons of Quality

Warriors and adventurers sometimes bestow names on items of war gear that prove worthy. This is most common with blades and spears, rarer with helms and shields, and almost unknown with suits of armour. Elves and Northmen follow similar naming traditions, bestowing titles upon their weapons glorifying their effectiveness in battle, such as 'Orc-cleaver,' 'Foe-hammer,' or 'Battle-friend,' in their respective languages (weapons with loftier or more poetic names, such as 'Snow Point' or 'Cold Star,' are almost always items of nobler lineage or greater antiquity, rarely given as Rewards).

Weapons of worth are so highly esteemed among the Bardings that sometimes they even name their sons and daughters after pieces of war gear ('Bard' can be translated as 'Battle-axe'), especially if there is a family heirloom to be passed along generations of warriors.

On the other hand, the Beornings do not often call a weapon the same name more than twice during the same day, but use many variations on a similar theme (the same sword can be called at times 'Life-taker,' at other 'Byrnie-biter,' another 'Throng-plough,' then 'Thicket-clearer,' and so on). Beorn has been heard saying that he calls any weapon good which is true to his master.

Hobbits rarely give titles to their weapons. If they do, it is probably because such an item has saved their lives. In any case, they tend to choose simple or otherwise unpretentious names taken from ordinary life.

Dwarves do not name their weapons at all, even renowned artefacts, which are most likely to be known by their legendary owners (such as the Axe of Durin). Nevertheless, it is entirely possible that they give names to their weapons but keep them secret.

a second Quality, making it Grievous. Now, he carries a superior sword, with a Keen and Grievous blade.

Adding a Cultural Reward to an item counts towards the maximum of 3 Qualities that can be attributed to it (i.e. an item can feature up to 2 Qualities and a Cultural Reward).

Cunning Make (armour, headpiece or shield)

A skilled craftsman has made this piece of equipment lighter or less cumbersome than its lesser counterparts, thus reducing its Encumbrance.

The Encumbrance rating of the selected item is reduced by 2 (to a minimum of 0 Encumbrance).

This upgrade may be applied to any defensive item, and can be selected multiple times (always up to a maximum of 3 Qualities per item).

Close-fitting (armour or headpiece)

A skilful smith has made this piece of protective equipment more difficult to overcome with a piercing blow.

The selected item's Protection rating gets a bonus of +1.

This upgrade may be applied to any suit of armour or helm, and can be selected multiple times (always up to a maximum of 3 Qualities per item).

Reinforced (shield, unique)

The shield's structure is reinforced, possibly with a metal rim or a larger iron boss, letting its wearer parry blows with greater ease.

The shield's Parry bonus is raised by 1. In addition, the shield cannot be smashed.

This upgrade may be applied only once, to any type of shield (buckler, shield or great shield).

Grievous (weapon, unique)
The weapon is strong and heavy, inflicting more harm on its targets.

The weapon's Damage rating is raised by 2 (a weapon that can be wielded with one or two hands gets the bonus to both its Damage ratings).

This upgrade may be applied only once, to any one weapon.

Keen (weapon, unique)
Sharp and well-balanced, this weapon is more likely to produce a piercing blow when hitting its target.

The weapon's Edge rating is reduced by 1 (note that an Edge rating of ᚹ becomes a rating of 10).

This upgrade may be applied only once, to any one weapon type.

Fell (weapon, unique)
Hard and straight, a piercing blow from a fell weapon is stopped less easily by a suit of armour.

The weapon's Injury rating is raised by 2.

This upgrade may be applied only once, to any one weapon type.

Cultural Rewards – Bardings
The city of Dale prospered in the North for centuries. When it was finally rebuilt, many relics of its proud heritage were found. Other valuables had been kept away from the ruin, as the prized possessions of ancient families that fled to Lake-town.

Dalish Longbow (great bow)
The bowyers of Dale used prodigiously tall and powerful staves of fine yew wood to make bows for their King's men.

When you get a ᚹ on the Feat die using a Dalish Longbow, the target must roll the Feat die twice and choose the worst result for his Protection test roll.

Spear of King Bladorthin (spear)
The Dwarves of the Mountain forged these spears for a king who lived before the Dragon came. Their thrice-forged heads never lose their keenness, and their shafts are inlaid with gold.

When you make a ranged attack using a Spear of King Bladorthin, you roll the Feat die twice and choose the best result.

Tower Shield (great shield)
The soldiers of Girion, Lord of Dale, carried great shields that were so tall that it was said that a grown man could completely hide behind them.

When you are using a Tower Shield, your Parry bonus gets an additional +3 against ranged weapons.

Cultural Rewards – Beornings
The Beornings have gathered many uncommon pieces of war gear under the roof of Beorn's wooden hall: the heirlooms of ancient families and the findings of years of life in the Wild.

Giant-slaying Spear (great spear)
A Giant-slaying Spear is an unusually long great spear made of ash wood, once used only from horseback.

When you attack creatures greater than human-sized, the Damage rating of the Giant-slaying Spear is raised by +4.

Noble Armour (leather armour)

Craftsmen of old have long laboured on these coats of leather, shaping and decorating them with lacquers and other ornaments.

When wearing Noble Armour at an encounter you receive one free Encounter advantage bonus die. Additionally, your Valour and Wisdom scores enjoy a bonus of +3 as far as calculating Tolerance is concerned.

Splitting Axe (axe or great axe)

A Beorning Splitting Axe has a wedge-shaped head, capable of rending armour with its strokes, a hold-over from a time when a Northman needed a weapon capable of piercing the skin of a Dragon.

When you get a ᚹ on the Feat die using a Splitting Axe, the target rolls one Success die less on his Protection test.

Cultural Rewards - Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain

The fabulous hoard of Smaug contained countless treasures, artefacts created by craftsmen whose secrets are now lost. And many other precious things have been added to the riches of Durin's Folk since the restoration of the Kingdom under the Mountain.

Axe of the Azanulbizar (great axe)

It is said that every Dwarf that survived the Battle of Azanulbizar returned from that battlefield bowed under a heavy burden, as he carried the weapons of those who died that day and whose bodies were burned in the pyre.

When you are attacking an enemy with an Attribute level of 7 or less, if you get a ᚹ on the Feat die using this axe, your opponent is made Weary for the remainder of the combat.

Dwarf-wrought Hauberk (mail armour)

The Dwarves of the Mountain make good coats of steel rings, but they cannot match the work of the armourers that lived before the Dragon came.

When you invoke an Attribute bonus on a Protection test, use your favoured Body rating as a bonus.

Helm of Awe (helm)

The Dwarven heroes of old wore helms with visors crafted by the hammer of the smith in hideous shapes, to better dismay the enemy that looked upon them.

When making a roll using **Awe**, you roll the Feat die twice and keep the best result.

Cultural Rewards - Elves of Mirkwood

The weaponsmiths of the Woodland Realm spent long years devising more efficient ways to defeat their enemies. The armouries of the Elvenking are filled with enough weapons to fight in many wars.

Bitter Spear (spear)

These spears were made with ash wood from what is now called Dol Guldur, once home to many woodland Elves.

If you get a ᚹ on the Feat die when attacking with a Bitter Spear, you get a +4 to your Injury rating.

Spearman's Shield (buckler)

The agile Elven warriors learnt long ago to profit from the protection of a small shield when using a great spear. These leaf-shaped bucklers are smaller than most.

Apply the Parry bonus of this buckler even if you are using a two-handed weapon in close combat.

Woodland Bow (bow)

The Silvan Elves have always eschewed the great bows favoured by many folks in the North. They prefer shorter and lighter bows that can be bent as quickly as possible, as in a forest the enemy can be anywhere.

You are always allowed to make one additional opening volley, even when no opening volleys are allowed (unless you are surprised).

Cultural Rewards – Hobbits of the Shire

The Mathom-house at Michel Delving contains many weapons of different and unusual provenance, and some hang as trophies above the hearths of old houses in the Shire.

Bow of the North Downs (bow)

One of the oldest stories told in the Shire remembers how a company of the best archers that the Shire could muster went north to aid the King in battle. They never returned, but a number of very strong bows are said to have been recovered from the battlefield and preserved to this day.

When making a ranged attack using a Bow of the North Downs, add to your rolls a bonus of +3, or your Valour rating (whichever is higher).

King's Blade (short sword)

At times, country Hobbits find ancient swords inside fallen mounds, amid tilled fields or washed ashore along a watercourse. Unable to discover their precise origin, they call them simply 'King's Blades.'

If you roll an great or extraordinary success on an attack using a King's Blade, spend 1 point of Hope to automatically inflict a Piercing Blow.

Lucky Armour (armour)

Suits of armour are very prized ornaments in the houses of the greater families of the Shire. The best among them can be still put to proper use, if an adventurous Hobbit demonstrates he deserves it.

If hit by a Piercing blow while wearing Lucky Armour, roll the Feat die twice and keep the best result on the Protection test.

Cultural Rewards – Woodmen of Wilderland

The four Houses of the Woodmen have always chosen keepers among their wise ones to guard the riches stored in their great halls. It is from their hands that worthy warriors receive their hard-earned Rewards.

Bearded Axe (long-hafted axe)

The most prized axes have a wide 'bearded' head, often scored with ancient runes of victory. The longer blade bites into enemies' shields, and its hooked end can be used to disarm them.

If you roll a great or extraordinary success on an attack using a Bearded Axe, you may choose not to apply your Damage rating to smash your opponent's shield OR disarm him instead.

Feathered Armour (armour)

Radagast has blessed these suits of armour with his cunning, and now they don't seem to make a sound when worn, whether they are made from animal skins or rings of steel.

When making a roll using **Stealth** wearing Feathered Armour, roll the Feat die twice and keep the best result.

Shepherds-bow (bow or great bow)

When a bow of any type is deemed very powerful, the Woodmen of Wilderland treasure it and call it a 'Shepherds-bow,' as they would use it to protect their herds and cattle from the preying claws of the Eagles of the Misty Mountains.

If you roll a great or extraordinary success on an attack using a Shepherds-bow, you inflict extra damage equal to your basic Heart rating.

- GEAR -

"They went down the slope, and across the stream where it dived under the road, and up the next slope, and up and down another shoulder of the hills; and by that time their cloaks, blankets, water, food, and other gear already seemed a heavy burden."

Adventurers do not see a familiar roof above their heads for much of the year. Some choose to live outdoors, but for many it is because they find refuge in strange quarters, or are forced to find shelter out in the wild. Selecting the right amount of things to carry is the first test of their mettle, and a light pack on a traveller's back is an indication of his experience in the trade. The same applies to an adventurer's war gear: they should fight the urge to choose the biggest weapons and the heaviest suits of armour, as a weighty and cumbersome burden is bound to seriously hamper their adventuring capabilities.

How Encumbrance Works

The Encumbrance rating of an item is used to limit the carrying capacity of a character to within reasonable limits.

As a general rule, an adventurer can carry gear with a total Encumbrance up to the character's maximum Endurance rating.

Since a hero's carried equipment determines his Fatigue score, it is generally much wiser to keep that total much lower than the maximum allowed. Players record their heroes' Fatigue scores on their character sheets (the Fatigue box is found under the Endurance box) when the adventurer is first created (see **Part Two: Creating a Hero**).

When a player raises the total Encumbrance of the equipment carried by a hero (for example, by adding a weapon to those he carries) his Fatigue rating is immediately adjusted to reflect the increased burden.

By contrast, if during play a player removes something from a hero's carried equipment, his Fatigue score is adjusted only after a prolonged rest (as the character is considered to have already suffered from the burden of the carried equipment).

Personal Possessions

As explained during character creation, player-heroes leave home prepared to spend long periods of time travelling and sleeping in the open. For this reason, every character is supposed to be carrying the essential equipment for a life of adventuring. This equipment is summarised as a character's travelling gear and war gear.

Should a character feel the need to acquire different or unusual equipment, possibly because the current adventure demands it, the Loremaster and his players may find the following guidelines helpful (weapons and other war gear are not covered by the following rules, as acquiring such prized possessions is a different matter entirely).

Standards of Living

The characters in *The One Ring* are adventurers, individuals used to relying on their abilities to find sustenance in the wild, rather than by putting their hands into their money bags. To avoid the need for a lengthy equipment list or overly-detailed rules for economics, a character's culture provides them with a Standard of Living. This rating describes the affluence of an individual coming from that culture.

The Standard of Living rankings are *Poor, Frugal, Martial, Prosperous* or *Rich*. A character's Standard of Living is used to determine his access to resources; for example, to assess whether he can afford to buy a new pair of boots to replace the one he lost, or if he can give something to a fisherman in exchange for renting his boat, or even if he could reasonably have a length of rope already stashed somewhere among his travelling gear.

Out of Pocket Expenses

Using the following guidelines, the Loremaster and his players should be able to judge in most circumstances what a character can afford.

Buying a round of beers for all patrons at an inn should not be a problem for a Barding character who comes from a Prosperous culture, while it could be difficult for a Woodman hero, coming from a Frugal folk.

Sometimes, it could be helpful to compare a character's Standard of Living with that of the individual selling an item or providing the service.

For example, Ulf, a Beorning hero, has a mind to buy passage on a cart led by a merchant from Dale headed for Esgaroth. Beornings are a Martial folk, and the Prosperous merchant from Dale doesn't see anything among Ulf's possessions worthy of his time and discomfort. It is probably time for Ulf to look for different ways to persuade the merchant...

Equipment

The same approach can be used when a player is wondering whether his character should already have a particular item among his standard possessions. When this happens, the player should ask himself (or the Loremaster) how relevant the object in question is to his character's trade. In this case, a character's calling should provide most answers, especially if combined with an appropriate Standard of Living.

For example, should a Barding Treasure-hunter have among his possessions a set of lock-picks? Yes, and a high-quality set it is, too.

Standards of Living Descriptions

The material comforts and relative wealth enjoyed by an average person at each Standard of Living are described below (including advice and notes regarding the spending capability of a hero when actively adventuring). Presented in order of increasing relative wealth, each Standard of Living rank is roughly twice as affluent as the rank preceding it.

Poor

Impoverished people are probably suffering from a bad harvest season, a fell winter, or the aftermath of a disease or war. They struggle every day to find what they need to survive, and have no time or resources to look for anything beyond the bare necessities, let alone equip themselves for adventure.

Frugal

Frugal folk usually sleep in comfortable common halls (or tents, if nomadic) and eat the produce of their own lands and pastures. They wear simple clothes at most times, although they may possess finer garments for special gatherings like season festivals, marriages or funerals. Jewels and other superior ornaments, if any are in the keeping of members of the society, are treasured as possessions belonging to the community, and are passed down through generations of appointed keepers.

Adventurers coming from a Frugal folk do not usually carry anything of unusual worth (unless as part of their war gear), with the possible exception of one or two pieces of expensive clothing or common jewellery, like a rich mantle or a golden necklace or bracelet; probably a token of their status among their peers. Consequently, Frugal adventurers can rarely afford to pay for anything, and prefer to find or make what they need instead.

Martial

Individuals belonging to a Martial culture often live according to their status in the military hierarchy, with simple warriors and soldiers sleeping together in a common area; probably as part of the household of a renowned chieftain or noble. Meals are usually consumed in large halls, with seats and tables arranged to observe rules of precedence or respect. Clothing reflects the military status of an individual as well, or that of his family.

Martial player-heroes have enough resources to look after themselves, and to pay for such things as simple accommodation and meals. Ever mindful of the cost of any luxury, they often lead an austere life, or resort to haggling to lower the price of whatever they are trying to get hold of.

Prosperous

Almost all families belonging to a Prosperous culture can afford to live in separate, private houses. Important individuals wear fine clothing and often have one or more servants in their service at home.

Characters coming from a Prosperous culture can usually pay for their share of any out of pocket expense encountered along their journey, and might even pay for another companion, if need be. This includes, for example, paying for comfortable accommodation, spending some time drinking in company at an inn, and hiring beasts of burden (such as ponies).

Rich

Members of a Rich culture live amidst all sorts of luxuries, reaping the fruits of flourishing trade or vast treasure. Although those less well-off warn that affluence can easily lead to spiritual or even physical weakness, the availability of material wealth may instead set an individual free to focus on more lofty matters, like the perfection of a trade or art.

Rich adventurers fare better than their Prosperous fellows, but not excessively so. Their life on the move does not let them take full advantage of their resources, as a good proportion of their wealth will be made up of land and riches.

War Gear

As seen in **Part Two: Creating a Hero** (page 78), at the beginning of the game players may equip their characters with any weapon their heroes have the ability to use, and any shield and suit of armour they choose to carry or wear. If a hero loses or breaks any of these items, they can be replaced automatically, at the next friendly settlement they reach or other appropriate moment in the narrative. At most, a small favour may be demanded if the settlement is not of their own culture, such as the performance of a task, or simply a song or tale.

Below are flavourful descriptions for each type of weapon or protective gear available to characters beginning their adventures in Wilderland. The statistics for each item are included in the corresponding tables for reference — more information on what they mean can be found on pages 123 and 126.

Headgear

Worn in battle or for ceremonial purposes, helmets are usually made of leather or iron, but sometimes of more precious metals. The shape of a headpiece is often distinctive, as it helps in identifying the wearer individually or at least as belonging to a particular folk. More often than not, the protective features of the helmet, especially nose-guards or close-fitting cheek-guards, make it impossible to recognise the wearer otherwise.

Helm

A headpiece providing full protection, sporting a nose-guard and cheek-guards and protection for the back of the neck.

Cap of iron and leather

An open helmet, the cap sacrifices some protection for comfort and a wider field of vision.

Armour

A suit of armour is an essential asset for any warrior in battle. The level of protection, weight and beauty of armour depends on the material used and the cunning of its maker.

Leather Armour

The simplest suit of armour available, leather armour is made of layers of cured and hardened animal hide sewn together. It is ideal for hunting or travelling as it is lightweight and comfortable, especially compared with mail armour. Leather armour may be crafted as a shirt, or a close-fitting corslet with long sleeves, extending its protection to the wearer's hips.

Mail Armour

The most effective type of armour encountered in Middle-earth at the end of the Third Age is mail armour: suits of close-fitting rings of metal, created to protect from cutting and thrusting weapons. From the shining hauberks of Elven lords to the black mail of Orc-chieftains, mail armour appears in widely different qualities. Ancient mail-coats of Dwarf-make, when found, are matchless and prized possessions.

A mail shirt is a chain garment protecting the back, chest and abdomen of its wearer, while a coat of mail is a shirt with long sleeves. A mail hauberk is a longer coat with skirts of mail covering the knees of the wearer, making it ideal for those riding into battle.

Armour:

Armour	Encumbrance	Protection	Type
Leather shirt	4	1d	Leather armour
Leather corslet	8	2d	Leather armour
Mail-shirt	12	3d	Mail armour
Coat of mail	16	4d	Mail armour
Mail hauberk	20	5d	Mail armour
Cap of iron and leather	2	+1	Headgear
Helm*	6	+4	Headgear

*May be removed in combat to lower Fatigue by 3 points

Shields

Armour is often ineffective against the heaviest of weapons, such as maces or other blunt instruments of war, and many warriors use shields to deflect incoming blows. Usually made of wood covered in leather and reinforced with metal, shields vary in form and purpose. They are held and manoeuvred with one hand (or forearm, for larger shields), leaving the other free to wield a weapon. When a shield is not in active use, for example when wielding a weapon with both hands, or when travelling, it can be carried on a person's back, using a strap.

Often, shields are painted in the colours of a warrior's folk, household or allegiance. Soldiers from many Free Peoples' armies are trained to form a shield wall when defending a position, standing in formation shoulder to shoulder, holding their shields so that each man benefits from his neighbour's shield, as well as his own.

Most Orcs also bear shields, made of metal, wood or animal hide, to use with their scimitars or cruel spears. Orc shields are blazoned with their Lord's ghastly devices. Shields portrayed in legends and rhymes of lore are often scored with runes to ward off wounds and harm from the warrior bearing it.

Buckler

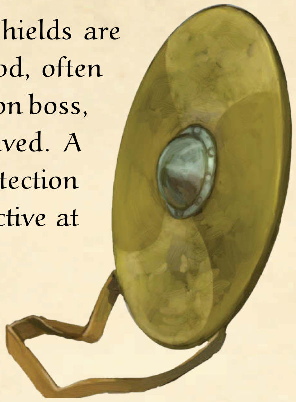
Circular and made of wood reinforced by a protruding metal boss, bucklers are usually smaller and lighter than regular shields.

Great Shield

Huge and round or barrel-shaped, these shields are carried in battle by the sturdiest of warriors, and are used to carry back their bodies should they fall, but are considered too cumbersome and unwieldy by some.

Shield

Round, oval or kite-shaped, shields are made of several layers of wood, often reinforced by a large central iron boss, usually decorated and engraved. A regular shield offers good protection from arrows, and is very effective at close quarters.



Shields

Shields	Encumbrance	Parry Modifier
Buckler	1	+1
Shield	3	+2
Great shield	5	+3

Swords

The sword with a straight blade has always been the weapon of choice among free Men and Elves. A mark of nobility or rank, swords of superior craftsmanship are passed down by generations of warriors, and arms of ancient lineage are often imbued with spells and curses, the bane of the servants of the Shadow.

Swords vary in size, shape, and quality, as diverse as the folks that craft them. Many malevolent creatures have devised swords after their own fashion, usually crude counterfeits of those made by Men and Elves.

Short Sword

Daggers and knives of unusual size, or smaller swords created for combat at close quarters.

Long Sword

Only superior craftsmen can produce longer blades. These wonderful Elven and Dwarven weapons, and the keen blades forged from strange metals by the Men of the West, are often known as long swords. A long sword may either be wielded with one hand, or used to hack and sweep with two hands.

Sword

A straight-bladed, two-edged sword, wielded in one hand to hew or thrust. This is the most common type of sword.

Axes

The axe is the weapon of choice for most Dwarves, and in their culture it surpasses the sword in both nobility and respect. Dwarven weaponsmiths apply their cunning to making axes of many different shapes and uses, from metals of various colours. Axes are often preferred to swords by warriors who favour a more brutal approach, as the heavy head of a heftily wielded axe is more likely to cleave through armour or shield than a sword swing.

Axe

A simple fighting variation on the common woodcutting tool, axes hang from the belt of many adventurers raised in or near forests.

Great Axe
Sometimes double-headed, the great axe is an impressive heavy weapon that can only be wielded with two hands.

Long-hafted axe
Borne with one or two hands, a long-hafted axe is designed to hack through the toughest of armour. It is difficult to manoeuvre but when mastered it is a fearful weapon, as a skilled fighter learns to fight with the long haft of the axe and its reinforced tip in addition to the blade.

Spears
The spear is arguably the most widespread weapon across Middle-earth, arming kings and soldiers, riders and footmen. It is often no more than a long wooden shaft, tipped by a leaf-shaped metal head, but some spears are works of majestic craftsmanship, valuable heirlooms of noble households.

The length of a spear varies according to the use it is designed for. Spears can be wielded one or two-handed to thrust and lunge, cast to pierce from a distance, or used from horseback as lances. Warriors equipped with a spear will almost always use it in conjunction with a shield, and they will usually carry an additional weapon such as a sword or axe.

Great Spear
With a shaft longer than any other spear, a great spear cannot be used as a ranged weapon and must be wielded with two hands.

Spear
Approximately six feet in length, a spear can be hurled as a javelin or deftly thrust with one hand.

Bows
A traditional hunting weapon, the bow is also commonly used in warfare. Made from a single piece of wood, or from a composition of wood, horn, or even metal, bows are a versatile weapon and can be used during sieges, from horseback, in dense woodland or in the open field.

Warriors bearing bows into battle usually carry another weapon, to draw when the enemy gets closer; they seldom carry shields, as they can't use them when shooting a bow.

Bow
The simple bow is not very different from a hunting-bow. It never measures more than five feet in length, so as to be strung the more quickly. Elves from Mirkwood use bows, as they do not need the superior range of a great bow while fighting under the eaves of their forest.

Great Bow
As tall as a man and offering superior potency, a great bow can only be used by warriors with the height and stature to bend it fully. An arrow from a great bow can pierce the toughest of armour.

Other Weapons

Dagger
One-handed blades have a range of uses, from skinning animals to settling disputes among brutes. Daggers and knives are very common, and in the wild areas of the land, no man, woman or child is found without one in their belt.

Mattock

A heavy digging implement sporting a curved head with a point on one side and a spade-like 'blade' on the other, it was used to fearsome effect by the Dwarves who followed Dáin Ironfoot during the Battle of Five Armies.

Characteristics of Weapons and Armour

These values are explained in more detail in the Combat section found on page 175. In brief:

Damage

A weapon's damage rating indicates the harm, in Endurance, inflicted on the target with every successful attack. This value is modified by a character's Damage bonus when the attack roll produces a great or extraordinary result.

Edge

On a successful roll, the Feat die result is compared to the Edge rating of the weapon used: if the result matches or overcomes that number, the roll inflicts a piercing blow and the target must make a Protection roll to avoid being Wounded.

Injury

This is the Target Number for a character's Protection roll to avoid being wounded when they are hit by a piercing blow.

Parry Modifier

This is the bonus a shield gives to a defender's Parry rating.

Protection

This is the bonus used when a defender rolls for a Protection test; armour adds one or more additional dice, while headgear adds a numerical bonus.

Thrown and Ranged Weapons

Spears and bows are ranged weapons capable of striking

Weapons:

Weapon	Damage	Edge	Injury	Enc	Group	Notes
Dagger	3	ᚠ	12	0	-	-
Short sword	5	10	14	1	Swords	-
Sword	5	10	16	2	Swords	-
Long sword	5 (1h) / 7 (2h)	10	16 (1h) / 18 (2h)	3	Swords	It can be used with one or two hands. The Damage and Injury entries list two separate ratings.
Spear	5	9	14	2	Spears	Can be thrown
Great spear (2h)	9	9	16	4	Spears	Two-handed weapon. It cannot be thrown
Axe	5	ᚠ	18	2	Axes	-
Great axe (2h)	9	ᚠ	20	4	Axes	Two-handed weapon
Long-hafted axe	5 (1h) / 7 (2h)	ᚠ	18 (1h) / 20 (2h)	3	Axes	It can be used with one or two hands. The Damage and Injury entries list two separate ratings.
Bow	5	10	14	1	Bows	Ranged weapon
Great bow	7	10	16	3	Bows	Ranged weapon
Mattock (2h)	8	10	18	3	-	Two-handed weapon

the enemy from a distance. The following table shows the distance in yards at which the weapons are effective.

Weapon Ranges (in yards):

Weapon	Short range	Medium range	Long range
Thrown spear	5 + Body rating	10 + Body rating	20 + Body rating
Bow	10 + Body rating	20 + Body rating	30 + Body rating
Great bow	20 + Body rating	30 + Body rating	40 + Body rating

- Life and Death -

"Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life."

For heroes adventuring in the twilight years of the Third Age, harm and injury have grievous consequences, and even a survivable wound can keep a character out of action for a long time. It is a dark age, where houses of healing are rare and knowledge of the proper treatment of wounds is mostly lost, not least in lordly households where wisdom, if not lore, has slowly withered away.

Endurance and Hope

While Attributes and Skills are the basis for all actions a character attempts, and Traits provide qualities that set heroes outside the norm, Endurance and Hope are what keep an adventurer on the road or provide him with reserves of energy – often the only chance for a hero to succeed against overwhelming odds.

Endurance and Hope are internal resources that are tapped in a moment of need, or that are consumed when some form of threat takes its toll on the character. During play, heroes use up Hope and Endurance points as they are hurt or frightened, or attempt difficult tasks, and restore them through rest or life-affirming events.

Details about how to calculate a character's Endurance and Hope ratings can be found on page 76. A hero's total Hope and Endurance scores are maximum values; recovered points cannot take either pool above its total. Players should be prepared to erase and rewrite their values on the character sheet, or could track them using different coloured counters or glass beads.

Endurance

Endurance represents a hero's resistance to injury, physical or psychological stress, even torture. Whenever a character is subjected to some form of harm or toil, his Endurance score is reduced accordingly.

Endurance loss should not be confused with being Wounded: while every successful attack in combat provokes a loss of Endurance, a player-hero is only at risk of a Wound when hit by a Piercing blow, a precise attack that threatens to bypass the target's armour and defences completely and cause them serious injury.

Fatigue

Fatigue determines when the weight and bulk of the equipment normally carried by a hero starts to affect his performance. A character's Fatigue threshold is first calculated during hero creation and is normally equal to the sum of the Encumbrance ratings of the adventurer's selection of weapons and protective gear (see page 77 for details).

Losing Endurance

During play, player-heroes lose Endurance points to blows suffered in combat, as the consequence of strenuous efforts, and to other sources of physical harm.

When, for any reason, the Endurance score of a character drops to a level equal to or lower than his Fatigue score, the hero is considered to be Weary. Check the Weary box on the character sheet, and apply the effects to the character (see page 128).

If a character's Weary box was already checked, then losing Endurance doesn't provoke any additional effect.

When a character's Endurance score is reduced to 0 points, he is physically exhausted and falls unconscious.

Lost Endurance points are recovered swiftly if a hero is allowed to rest and feed, unless a hero is wounded or sick.

Hope

Hope is a character's reserve of spiritual fortitude and positivity. A hopeful character can keep going when physically stronger heroes have already succumbed to despair. During play, a player-hero spends Hope to invoke Attribute bonuses or to trigger the effect of several Cultural Virtues.

Shadow

Shadow points reflect the marks left on a character when his spirit is tainted by doubt and despair. Starting characters begin the game with a Shadow rating of 0.

Spending Hope

During play, a player-hero spends Hope to invoke Attribute bonuses or to trigger the effects of several Cultural Virtues.

When the Hope score of a hero decreases to reach his Shadow rating, the hero is considered to be Miserable. Check the Miserable box on the character sheet, and apply the effects to the character (If a character's Miserable box was already checked, then losing Hope doesn't provoke any additional effect).

Note that a character who has a Shadow rating of 0 does not become Miserable when his Hope is reduced to 0.

If a character finds his Hope score reduced to 0 points, he is spiritually spent. A hopeless hero cannot bear to continue a struggle of any sort, and will flee from any source of danger or stress, by escaping from the field of battle, for example, or storming out on a debate.

Heroes may recover Hope during a game session spending Fellowship points, and possibly through their Fellowship focus (see The Fellowship below for details).

States of Health

While normally hale, the Endurance of characters can decrease rapidly or their Hope may dwindle. As explained previously, they can find themselves suddenly Weary or Miserable as a consequence, but they may also be Wounded or Poisoned in combat. They could even be knocked out, or fall into unconsciousness through sheer exhaustion.

Weary

As explained before, a hero becomes Weary when his current Endurance score is equal to or lower than his Fatigue rating. Other sources of harm may make a hero temporarily Weary, even if his Endurance is still above his Fatigue rating.

As long as a hero is Weary, all the Success dice he rolls for any test that end up giving a result of 1, 2 or 3 (the outlined numbers) are considered to have rolled a 0 instead.

When a character is made Weary through the loss of Endurance, check the **Weary** box on the character sheet with a cross (×).

When this is the case, the hero suffers the consequences of being Weary until properly rested (see Resting on page 131).

Sources of strain other than the loss of Endurance generally make a hero only temporarily Weary, usually for as long as the source of strain lasts (for the length of a combat encounter, for instance).

When a character is temporarily Weary, place a tick (✓) in the **Weary** box.

When the temporary weariness passes, the mark is simply erased and the hero is once again hale without the need for an extended rest.

Exhaustion

When a character's Endurance score drops to 0, he is exhausted and drops unconscious (see Unconscious opposite). Players whose characters are made unconscious

due to loss of Endurance should be careful to check the characters' **Weary** box, too (if he wasn't Weary already).

Miserable

A hero is considered to be Miserable when his Hope score is equal to or lower than his Shadow rating. Other sources of harm may also cause a hero to become temporarily Miserable, even if his Hope score didn't fall below his Shadow rating.

As long as a hero is Miserable, he is in danger of suffering a bout of madness and temporarily lose control of himself (see page 225 for details).

When a character is rendered Miserable through the loss of Hope, the **Miserable** box on the character sheet is checked with a cross (×).

When this happens, the hero is considered Miserable until his Hope score rises above his Shadow rating once again.

When this happens, the character is immediately restored to his usual spiritual state and no longer experiences the negative effects of being Miserable.

Factors other than the loss of Hope make a hero only temporarily Miserable. Temporary Misery usually lasts for as long as the cause remains in effect (for the length of a combat encounter, for instance).

When a character is made temporarily Miserable, place a tick (✓) in the **Miserable** box.

Note that a character who has a Shadow rating of 0 does not become Miserable when his Hope is reduced to 0.

Spent Heroes

If a character's Hope score is reduced to 0, the adventurer is spiritually drained. A spent hero cannot bear himself to continue a struggle of any sort, and will flee from any source of danger or stress at the first opportunity, unless cornered and forced to fight.

Wounded

A Wounded character has received a life-threatening blow: an open wound or other critical injury. While losing and recovering Endurance is an everyday occurrence for an adventurer, being Wounded is a more serious predicament, which is going to affect a character for much longer. Characters are Wounded most often in combat.

When a hero is Wounded for any reason, the player checks the **Wounded** box on the character sheet as a reminder.

Players should note that a Wounded character is not necessarily Weary, unless the appropriate box is checked too.

Knock Out

Being Wounded does not have any immediate consequences on the fighting performance of a character, as it is a warrior's prerogative that of being able to endure such pain, but the injury puts a character in danger of being knocked out of combat:

When a character whose **Wounded** box has already been checked is Wounded again, he immediately becomes Unconscious (see below).

The second Wound is not recorded in any way. The character was simply knocked out, or passed out from shock.

Unconscious

A character who receives a second Wound or who isn't Wounded but is reduced to 0 Endurance passes out and drops unconscious. He is now totally in the hands of his companions – or worse, in those of his opponents.

As soon as an Unconscious character gains one or more Endurance points, he wakes up immediately (whether he fell unconscious due to loss of Endurance or because he was Wounded after his Wounded box was already checked).

Dying

When a Wounded hero is reduced to 0 Endurance, he passes out and is considered to be Dying.

A dying character will perish if he doesn't get help soon (see Getting Better, overleaf).

Killing Blow

Adventurers are at risk of death when they drop to 0 Endurance while Wounded, but they can also be killed outright:

A character whose Wounded box was already checked is killed immediately when he receives another Wound AND is reduced to 0 Endurance points at the same time.

Narvi the Dwarf has just been Wounded by a Spider bite, and the following rounds of combat have taken their toll on his Endurance: he is left with 8 points! Braving the threat to his life, Narvi keeps fighting, as the enemy's onslaught seems to be finally on the verge of relenting. Unfortunately for the Dwarf, a Spider hits him with its parting shot, for a great success and a Piercing blow! He is hit for 12 points of Endurance loss, and the iron mandibles of the Spider cut through his armour, causing a second Wound. Narvi's thoughts fly far away as his eyes see no more...

Coup de Grâce

An unconscious, or otherwise defenceless, hero is killed automatically if an opponent has the time to administer a coup de grâce (one combat turn). The action doesn't require a roll, but the adversary must possess the means to kill the character quickly and efficiently (a weapon or a lethal form of attack).

Poisoned

Adventurers can be Poisoned in several ways: they could be bitten by a giant Spider, hit by an Orcish broad-bladed sword, or end up eating venison hunted in the wrong part of Mirkwood.

A Poisoned character is considered to be Wounded. Thus, if an already Poisoned character is Wounded once, he falls unconscious as if Wounded twice (likewise, a Wounded character falls unconscious when Poisoned).

Different poisons may provoke different additional effects. A Poisoned character remains as such until a proper remedy is applied, or the effects of the particular poison affecting him wear off.

Condition	Trigger	Effect
Weary	Endurance equal to or below Fatigue.	Success dice showing number in outline (1-3) give a result of 0.
Miserable	Hope equal to or below Shadow.	On a 👁 result, the hero suffers a bout of madness.
Wounded	Failed Protection test.	A Wounded hero recovers slowly and is knocked unconscious if Wounded again.
Spent	0 Hope.	Hero flees from any danger or source of stress.
Unconscious	Wounded twice OR 0 Endurance.	An unconscious hero wakes up as soon as he gains Endurance. Can be killed with a coup de grâce.
Dying	Wounded AND 0 Endurance.	Hero dies unless treated with a successful Healing roll within 12 hours.
Poisoned	Poisoned weapon or attack.	Hero is considered Wounded.

Getting Better

Characters improve their health mainly by resting. A good night's sleep might successfully mend a hero's spirit, as well as his body. But some injuries are so terrible that they require greater attention and care.

Recovery

Fighters soon learn to fully exploit the briefest of pauses to recover their much-needed energies.

A character who is not Wounded, and who at the end of combat is given the time to catch his breath (to rest for at least half an hour) recovers a number of Endurance points equal to his Heart score.

A character who fell Unconscious because his Endurance was reduced to 0, but wasn't Wounded, is allowed to recover normally (and thus wakes up after a short rest).

If a player-hero's Endurance score is not yet fully replenished after recovery, he will recuperate the remaining points at the normal rate for resting (see Resting, below).

Treating Wounds

A Wounded character may attempt to speed his recovery by making a Healing roll against a moderate difficulty (TN 14). A character who is not unconscious may attempt the roll himself, or allow another character to tend to him.

A successful Healing roll does not remove a Wound, nor does it restore lost Endurance points, but it lets the player underline the Wounded label on the character sheet, to mark the injury as *treated*.

The Loremaster should not allow a failed Healing roll to be repeated until at least a day has passed, as the failure of the treatment won't be immediately apparent.

A Wounded character whose injury was treated successfully recovers more rapidly than a hero with an untreated injury (see below).

Treating Dying Characters

Dying characters must have their Wound successfully treated with a Healing roll within approximately 12 hours, or they will die. As soon as their Wound is treated successfully, they are not considered to be dying any more.

Getting Better:

Action	Trigger	Effect	Notes
Recovery After Combat	Rest for at least 30 mins after combat.	Hero recovers Endurance equal to basic Heart score.	Wounded heroes cannot recover after combat.
Treating Wounds	Healing roll vs. TN14.	On a successful roll, underline the Wounded label to mark it as treated.	A failed Healing roll cannot be repeated before a day has passed.

Resting

Adventurers recover by resting regularly, as they regain Endurance points, shake off Weariness and see their injuries finally mend.

Recover Endurance

Player-heroes recover a number of Endurance points for every prolonged rest they enjoy every day (usually, a night's sleep). The amount of points recovered depends on the current health of the character:

- A Wounded hero with an untreated injury recovers 1 Endurance point.
- A Wounded hero with a treated injury recovers 2 Endurance points.
- An uninjured hero recovers 2 Endurance points, plus a number of points equal to his Heart rating.

The recovery rates listed below concern companions enjoying a night's sleep in a safe place. Travelling companions recover poorly, until they find a proper refuge (see Recovering Endurance while Travelling on page 162).

Shake off Weariness

A Weary adventurer whose Endurance score is higher than his Fatigue rating after a night's sleep or comparable rest is now properly rested.

A character who was Weary before he rested may now uncheck the Weary label on his character sheet.

Heal Wounds

When the Endurance score of an injured character reaches its maximum rating after a prolonged rest, the hero is considered to have been finally restored to full health, and the Wounded label on his character sheet can be unchecked.

Update Fatigue Rating

If a hero reduced the total Encumbrance of his carried gear before taking a prolonged rest, he may now update his Fatigue rating accordingly (see page 159 for details).

Condition	Effects of a Night's Sleep
Hero with untreated Wound	Recover 1 Endurance.
Hero with treated Wound	Recover 2 Endurance.
Uninjured hero	Recover 2 Endurance + basic Heart rating.
Weary hero	If Endurance is higher than Fatigue after resting hero is no longer Weary.
Wounded hero	If Endurance is back at maximum score after resting hero is no longer wounded.
Fatigue resting update	If Encumbrance was reduced before resting, update Fatigue rating.
Journey Fatigue recovery	Can be recovered only resting in a safe place (not while travelling) at a rate of 1 Fatigue for every night's sleep.

- Fellowship -

"You can trust us to stick to you through thick and thin – to the bitter end."

The life of a hero is one of excitement, but it is often full of hardships and trouble, and burdens easiest to bear when shared with others. For this reason, adventurers of all sorts gather in groups of companions, united by a common cause, be it to fight the Enemy, to lead a hunt for a prized prey, or to scour the land seeking for a lost or stolen treasure.

Representing friendship, loyalty and trust, Fellowship points and Fellowship focuses can be used by all player-heroes. Both provide a companion with a way to recover Hope points.

How Fellowship Points Work

Hope is an ever-dwindling resource: to overcome the many formidable challenges he is going to face, a player-hero who has just started his adventuring career is bound to count on it quite often (veterans might come to rely more on their own abilities).

To recover their much-needed trust and self-confidence, player-heroes should look no further than their own companions. Points taken from the Fellowship pool can be spent to refresh a character's Hope, while the company of a hero's Fellowship focus can allow him to recover points for free.

Fellowship Points

The number of points in a Fellowship pool available to a company of heroes at the beginning of the game is equal to the number of heroes in the group.

Members of the company may recover spent Hope by tapping into the Fellowship pool: for every Fellowship point spent, a character may raise his Hope score by 1. To do so, a player must get permission from at least half the other members of the company:

If this consensus cannot be found, he may either agree not to spend any points, or spend them anyway and gain a Shadow point for each Fellowship point used.

Players may recover any number of Hope points up to their maximum Hope score, as long as there are Fellowship points left. A player may tap into a company's Fellowship pool at any time. This means that a character can recover some of his lost Hope even as he exchanges blows with a hostile creature or as he bandies crooked words with a cunning diplomat.

Desperately trying to ward off a Giant Spider deep in Mirkwood, Ada Took spends her last Hope point for a Body Attribute bonus to her attack roll. But the fight is not yet done, and she cannot afford to become hopeless and flee. Ada's player, Suzie, appeals to her companions to be allowed to draw from the Fellowship pool; they readily agree, and she claims 2 points, bringing her Hope score back up to 2. Ada thinks of her friends, unconscious and bound in webs in the trees around her, and redoubles her efforts...

A company's Fellowship pool is completely refreshed at the beginning of each new gaming session.

Players may take advantage of their entire Fellowship pool of points, or use just a part of it, or not at all. 'Unused' Fellowship points do not carry over to the next session.

Fellowship Points:

Setting up the Fellowship Pool	Use
The company starts each session with a number of Fellowship points equal to the number of companions in the group.	At any time during the game, players may recover spent Hope points by spending Fellowship points: for every Fellowship point spent recover one Hope point.
To spend Fellowship points a player must get permission from at least half the other members of a company. If no permission is granted, a player may spend the points anyway and gain a Shadow point for each Fellowship point spent.	

Fellowship Focus

Fellowship focuses represent the strong ties between brothers in arms, close kinsmen and compatriots. Fellowship focuses have two effects in gameplay, as sources of Hope or as sources of inspiration.

As a Source of Hope

The presence of a Fellowship focus affects the way a character recovers Hope:

A player-hero recovers 1 point of Hope at the end of a session if his Fellowship focus didn't become Wounded, Poisoned, Miserable, or was harmed in any other way the Loremaster considers serious (such as imprisoned by Orcs) during play, and is in the same location as them.

A character gains 1 point of Shadow at the end of the session if his Fellowship focus was Wounded, or 3 points if the focus was killed.

As a Source of Inspiration

Successfully keeping their Fellowship focus safe might inspire a character so much that it lets him recover points of Hope:

If a player spends a Hope point to invoke an Attribute bonus to accomplish an action that can be considered to directly protect or favour his Fellowship focus and succeeds, he immediately recovers the Hope point he just spent.

Frár son of Frór eased down the corridor towards the cells, as quickly and quietly as Dwarven feet will allow, and found his brother Fíli in the second cage. "The Orcs are all eating and drinking," he hissed, fumbling with the crude lock, with only a dagger as a tool. "I'll set you free." Frár's player Jamie spends a point of Hope for a Body Attribute bonus to his ***Craft*** *roll to break the lock; Frár releases his brother and the two embrace awkwardly. As Fíli is Frár's Fellowship focus, the Loremaster immediately awards Frár a Hope point to replace the spent point.*

- Treasure -

"...about him on all sides, stretching away across the unseen floors, lay countless piles of precious things, gold wrought and unwrought, gems and jewels, and silver redstained in the ruddy light."

Travelling across a land that has seen three ages of the world, the adventurers are sooner or later bound to discover some form of treasure, and possibly claim it for themselves. Whether it is the forgotten hoard of a dead Dragon, a pile of gold and gems closely guarded by a Troll or the loot accumulated by generations of raiding Goblins, treasure provides players with a possible focus for their adventuring, a means for their characters to raise their personal prosperity, and another way to bring to light obscure tales from previous ages of Middle-earth.

How Treasure Works

The value of a treasure is reflected in a rating, ranging from a minimum of 1, equating roughly to the amount of money needed to sustain an adventurer for one month at a Prosperous Standard of Living, and possibly going up to 100,000.

Players record their individual Treasure rating on the back of their character sheet, and update it as they find and spend their hoard. This means that when a company of adventurers stumbles upon a source of treasure, its members must divide it among themselves, splitting its rating as they see fit and recording their resulting share on their character sheets.

Player-heroes are allowed to use the wealth represented by their Treasure rating when they opt to spend a Fellowship phase at home. During the Fellowship phase, there are different types of investment that can be made, each of which costs a certain amount of Treasure points. **Part Five: The Fellowship Phase** contains all the rules concerning how to invest Treasure.

Carrying Treasure

Players may burden themselves with their newfound riches, carrying along chests filled with valuables or stuffing their pockets with coins.

Every point of Treasure carried translates into one point of Encumbrance. This means that a character sees his Fatigue rating increased by one point for every point of Treasure he chooses to carry.

Hiding Treasure

The amount of gold, silver, gems or other valuables represented by a few points of Treasure might prove to be more than what a character is willing to carry when adventuring. Adventurers may opt for hiding their treasure

close to where they found it, with the intention of returning later to recover it.

Treasure:

Rating	Description
1	Enough for one adventurer to spend one month at a Prosperous Standard of Living.
2	Enough for one adventurer to spend one month at a Rich Standard of Living.
5	A princely gift.
10	Goblin hoard.
50	Orc-chieftain hoard.
100	Large hoard, or very rare and precious item.
200	Troll loot including rare and precious objects.
500	Silver and gold to last the rest of a middle-aged Hobbit's lifetime.
1000	A hundredth share of the fabulous hoard of Smaug the Dragon.

- Standing -

"It is true that for ever after he remained an Elf-friend, and had the honour of Dwarves, wizards, and all such folk as ever passed that way; but he was no longer quite respectable."

When heroes return home after months or even years spent travelling abroad, they should not be surprised to find themselves receiving suspicious looks, or even presumed dead by hasty officials and neighbours. Valour and Wisdom may mean much to the Wise and Powerful, but for the common folk there is nothing as damaging to one's respectability than going away to have adventures, especially if one cannot disguise one's new queer habits and keeps disturbing the peace by disappearing on a regular basis.

How Standing Works

A hero's Standing represents his position amongst the members of his own folk. Depending on the traditions of a culture, Standing may translate to admiration, acclaim or simple respectability. Standing ranges from 0 (lowest) to 6 (highest), and players record their rank on the back of their character sheet. Adventurers start their career with no rank in Standing.

In game terms, Standing is used to gauge how influential a hero can be when dealing with individuals and issues related to his home country. A hero's rating is put to practical use especially during the Year's End segment of a Fellowship phase (see page 200).

Standing Ranks:

Rating	Standing comparable to that of...
-	Homeless vagrants, wandering conjurors, unknown adventurers
1	Rangers
2	Respectable citizens
3	Officers, Shirriffs
4	Counsellors, Deputies, Marshals, prominent personalities
5	Alderman, Chieftain, Master, Mayor, Thain, Steward
6	King

- Part Four: Adventuring Phase -

The - Adventuring - Phase

Even the good plans of wise wizards like Gandalf and of good friends like Elrond go astray sometimes when you are off on dangerous adventures over the Edge of the Wild ...

Right-minded, respectable folk know that adventures are disturbing, uncomfortable things. Not only do they make people late for dinner, but they often imperil the lives of those who embark upon them.

Those who dare to cross the borders of the Wild are another breed entirely. Some are enthusiastic explorers seeking the last remaining artefacts of a forgotten age.

Others are valiant defenders of their people, venturing forth to defeat the forces of the dark that still plague the land. Yet more, perhaps the most heroic, are common folk putting aside their reluctance to leave their homes to do what needs to be done for the greater good. Regardless of their motivations, they are destined to confront the unknown, to brave dangers deemed insurmountable and face foes thought invincible. Such is the life of adventurers.

This chapter contains most of the rules that you will need during the Adventuring phase, including rules for journeys, combat and encounters, the building blocks of all adventures set in Middle-earth. These specialised rules all use the same method of action resolution, in the form of tasks and tests, which will be explained first.

How an Adventuring Phase Works

The Adventuring phase is by far the largest part of the game. It is here that the adventures take place, as opposed to the Fellowship phase, where the events in between the characters' adventures are described. During this phase, the Loremaster presents to the players the situations that the characters find themselves in, and weave the world of Middle-earth around them as they interact with it and attempt to achieve their objectives.

The Loremaster will challenge the players by putting them in difficult circumstances, setting fiendish plots for them to attempt to solve and confronting them with formidable opponents. This isn't achieved by steering the players along a pre-determined road, but by setting the world before them and helping them to create the path they choose to follow. One way to do this is to structure each game session as a series of problems to be solved.

As a story, an Adventuring phase is composed of many twisted plot threads: they can be unravelled gently and smoothly through clever gameplay, or can end up tied in knots if players stumble and produce new problems for themselves by making less than ideal choices.

A successful adventure should be a dynamic narrative, created when the players begin to explore the situation that the Loremaster presented them with. After taking in the information they have received, they will choose their courses of action. The Loremaster will describe what happens as a result of these actions, and the players will react to these developments, and the story begins to unfold. Once the game is under way, the Loremaster keeps the story flowing with a mixture of preparation and imagination.

- Action - Resolution

"Of the various burglarious proceedings he had heard of, picking the trolls' pockets seemed the least difficult..."

When heroes leave their homes to become adventurers, they leave behind much more than their usual abodes. They abandon the day-to-day tasks, crafts and routines to

face new challenges with every new dawn. With time, some actions become second nature to the seasoned adventurer, especially those necessary to survive in foreign lands or while traversing the empty wilderness. But surprising trials await even the most prepared of heroes...

This section provides players with a detailed explanation of the fundamental mechanics underlying the game. Armed with such knowledge, players will not only be able to make their die rolls and interpret the results, but will know how to enhance their character's performance, by taking advantage of their abilities at the right moment.

How Actions Work

The One Ring Roleplaying Game unfolds around a continuous interaction between the Loremaster and his players: the Loremaster sets the scene, the characters explore the world and he describes the consequences of their actions, the new situations they find themselves in and any obstacles to their progress. The players steer the story their own way by relating how their characters resolve their hurdles.

Of course, this interaction sometimes leads to situations that can't be resolved simply through roleplaying or common sense, as they challenge the talent and the abilities of their characters. When this happens, the Loremaster and his players turn to the rules of the game.

There are three common types of actions:

The majority of the actions taken by players during a game are *automatic* actions that do not require die rolling. Heroes who are attempting to open a normal, unlocked door, or who are trying to convince someone of something he already believes, or who are wading across the waters of a shallow forest stream, should be allowed to succeed automatically.

An action is called a *task* when it is called for by a player, whose character is trying to achieve something.

An action is a *test* when it is required by the Loremaster.

While automatic actions do not require any game mechanic to be resolved, tasks and tests both involve rolling dice, and are resolved in slightly differing ways (tasks are explained below; see page 144 for more on tests).

Task Resolution

A player may initiate a task when he wants something and already knows that he has to make a roll to get it, or when a player is describing what his character is going to do and the Loremaster informs him that to pull it off he has to make a roll. Most actions attempted by players are resolved as tasks.

Task Resolution:

Step	Procedure
Players declare their intent	Describe the task, choose the most appropriate skill, then set an objective to achieve.
Setting the TN	**The default difficulty is TN 14** (the Loremaster may alter the TN if the circumstances strongly suggest to do so).
Apply a Trait or Virtue	Get an automatic success or modify the roll.
Roll dice	Roll the Feat die plus a number of Success dice based on the ability used.
Add up the die results	If the roll total matches or beats the TN, the action is successful. One Ꮾ indicates a Great success, two or more Ꮾ an Extraordinary success.
Add Attribute bonus (if roll failed).	Spend one Hope to add the pertinent Attribute score to the roll total.

Statement of Intent

When he initiates a task, the acting player states clearly what his intentions are:

A clear statement of intent includes a description of the task being attempted, the name of the ability that the character is going to use to accomplish it (usually a Common skill), and the general objective that the character is trying to achieve.

It is Yule-tide, and Trotter is celebrating with the other adventurers and many villagers in the main hall of Rhosgobel. For his own secret motives, the Hobbit's player says that Trotter is leaving the feast-hall unnoticed. The Loremaster asks how Trotter will achieve this, as the hall is crowded, and Trotter's player announces that the Hobbit is going to sneak out using his ***Stealth*** *skill, trying to avoid attracting any attention to himself.*

Beli's player is of a different mind: a few moments earlier at the same feast, Beli noticed that a Woodman chieftain was wearing an intricately wrought mail coat and dropped a few casual remarks to enquire about it. Met with a wary look, Beli's player declares that the Dwarf starts to chat with the chieftain using his ***Courtesy*** *skill, with the intention of slowly steering the conversation back towards his excellent suit of armour.*

Choose Ability

As the examples above show, it is up to the acting player to pick the ability that his character is going to use. Players are trusted to choose the ability most appropriate to their purpose (the description of skills and their use is found starting from page 85, and a series of examples can be found below) but, as is the case with the use of Traits, their judgement is subject to the approval of the other players; in case of any objection, the Loremaster will be called upon to select the ability he deems to be most appropriate.

Set Objective

Selecting a pertinent ability for the task is important, but setting a proper objective is even more so: what the acting player chooses as his hero's goal for the task is what will happen if the ensuing roll is successful. Players should propose tasks only when they actually want something particular to happen: it must be an action with definite consequences, something that will have a clear impact on the game.

Trotter wants to leave the party without attracting attention, because he wants to find the Wizard Radagast for a private conversation. If the player simply wanted Trotter to leave the hall for a breath of fresh air, he probably wouldn't mind if his character's actions were noticed or not.

Beli is curious about the chieftain's armour as he knows that in the past there were Northmen who claimed the hoard of a Dragon. Beli wants to know if this suit of armour came from a similar treasure hoard.

Setting the Difficulty

As soon as a player has stated his intent clearly, the Loremaster rates the difficulty of the action by assigning it a Target Number.

Tasks are normally assumed to be set at TN 14 (moderate difficulty), unless the Loremaster has good reasons to

Typical Tasks:

Task	Ability	Task	Ability
Choose location to set up camp	*Explore*	Move quietly	*Stealth*
Climbing	*Athletics*	Negotiate a deal	*Insight or Persuade*
Cook meal	*Craft*	Obtain an audience with an important person	*Awe or Courtesy*
Find food in the Wild	*Explore or Hunting*	Open lock	*Craft*
Find traps	*Search*	Public speech	*Inspire*
Find solution to an enigma	*Riddle*	Riding	*Athletics*
Follow tracks	*Hunting*	Speak with a live Dragon	*Riddle*
Hiding	*Stealth*	Start a fire	*Craft*
Interpret writing	*Lore*	Swimming	*Athletics*

make the action harder or easier (Part Six: The Loremaster contains a set of guidelines aimed to help the Loremaster rate his players' tasks) – if he does so he will explain this to the players before they roll the dice.

*In the example above, nobody objects to Trotter's intention to sneak out using his **Stealth** skill. The Loremaster asks the player to continue with his narration, making it a task with TN 14.*

The chieftain that Beli is talking to is an elder who remembers many traditional rhymes warning Men of the double-dealing of Dwarves. The Loremaster warns Beli's player that the chieftain is wary of his enquiries, and sets the difficulty at TN 16 (hard).

Difficulty Table:

TN	Difficulty (skill rank ♦♦♦)
10	Very Easy
12	Easy
14	Moderate
16	Hard
18	Severe
20	Daunting

Apply a Trait or Virtue

When the Loremaster has set the difficulty of the task, the acting player may announce that he is going to use a special ability that applies to the situation at hand (a Trait or a Virtue, for example, to possibly improve his chances to succeed).

Trotter's player is afraid that it is going to be difficult for the Hobbit to exit the hall unnoticed. He decides to try a clever ruse: he invokes Trotter's 'Smoking' Trait, saying that the Hobbit pretends to reach for a torch by the door, as if he needed to light his pipe. The other players cheer at his idea and let him run with it: the Loremaster determines that the action is an automatic success.

Attribute Bonus

Talented heroes tend to fare better than less-capable individuals, often overcoming with ease challenges that may appear very difficult at first. Whenever they fail at a die roll, players may capitalise on their innate aptitudes and reverse the outcome of the action.

When a die roll results in a failure, the acting player may invoke an Attribute bonus and add to the result a value equal to the Attribute linked to the skill used for the attempt. If the modified result now matches or exceeds the action's TN, then the failure is turned into a success and the player spends a point of Hope.

Beli is not the most graceful of speakers and his die roll testifies it: a result of 13, a failure! The acting player invokes an Attribute bonus, adding 3 (Beli's Heart rating) to the result. The new result is equal to 16, a success. Beli's player happily spends a point of Hope.

Which Attribute?

Players who do not use the options available to them to affect the outcome of their actions might find themselves depending all too often on a sizable element of chance. Fortunately for their characters, players can always limit the randomness of an action test by invoking an Attribute bonus.

When the action is being resolved using a skill, the Attribute for the bonus depends on the skill's category (see Part Three: Fundamental Characteristics). If the action attempt does not require the use of a skill, then the relevant Attribute is probably defined by the action type.

Tests relying on Wisdom or Valour, for example, can be made easier by invoking a Heart Attribute bonus.

Players always take into consideration the basic value of an Attribute, unless the action is making use of a favoured skill. When this is the case, the bonus is equal to the Favoured Attribute rating instead.

Consequences

When the player and the Loremaster have decided on the factors affecting the task, the dice are rolled and their result is evaluated. There are two possible outcomes: the task was either successful or it failed. In any case, the story will be affected for better or worse.

The Task was a Success

When the acting player rolls the dice for his task and scores a success, he gets what he aimed for and the player briefly narrates how his stated objective has been achieved. On an ordinary success, the player must limit his narration to what he defined when he announced the task in the first place (the objective). If the roll produced a great or extraordinary success, then the player may suggest how his achievements outstripped his expectations.

Beli's roll resulted in a great success. His player describes how the Dwarf successfully introduces himself to the chieftain. Since the player obtained a great success, he proposes that Beli was so courteous that it is the chieftain himself that wants to talk about his mail coat, probably taking the chance to brag about his prized possession.

When describing the consequences of a successful roll, players must remember not to invent details that are in the Loremaster's hands, or that isn't pertinent to the task they accomplished.

For example, Beli's player cannot determine what the chieftain will say about his mail coat, as these details are part of the Loremaster's planned story.

The Task Failed

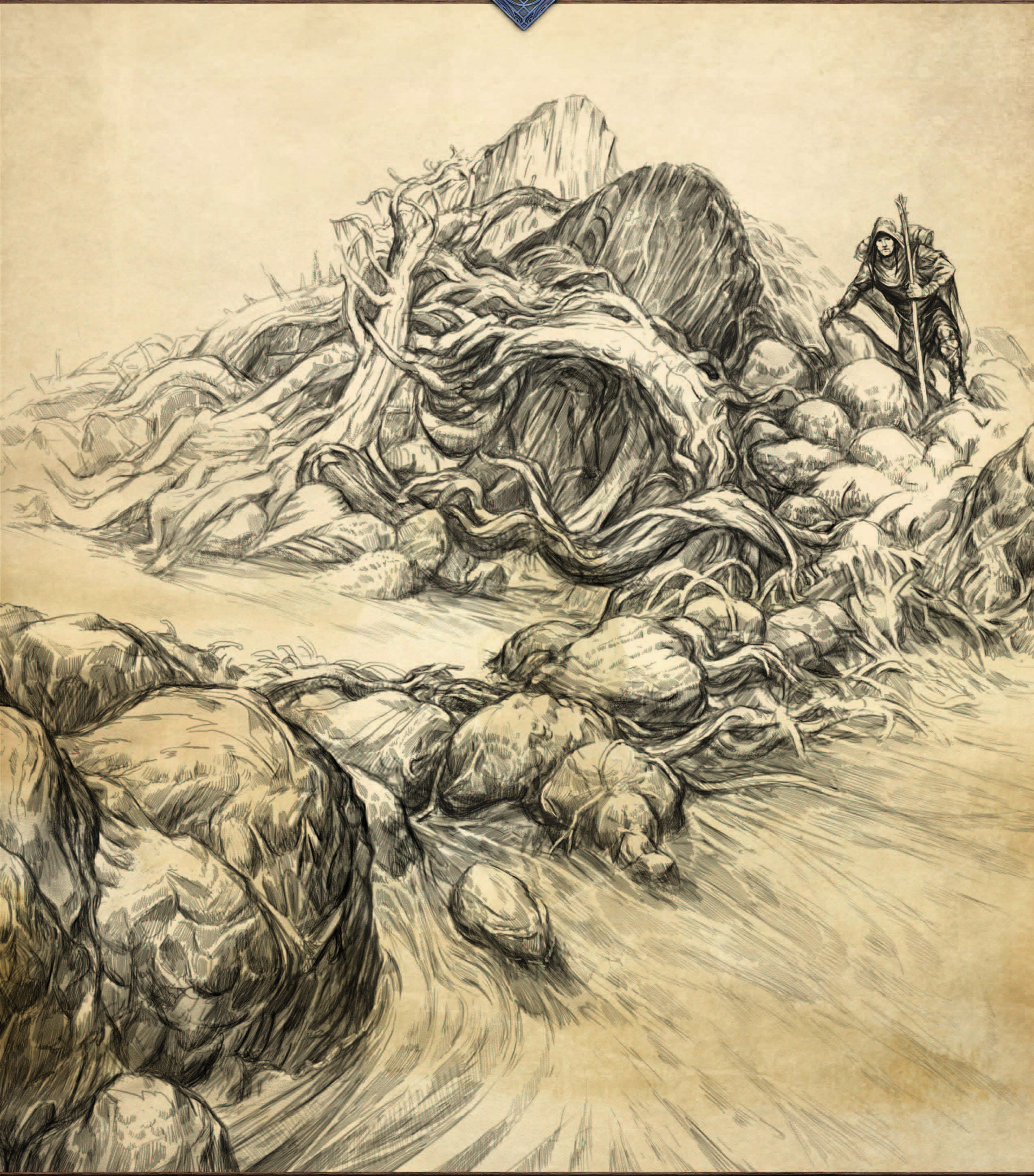
If the acting player fails his roll, he doesn't accomplish his objective. When this happens, the Loremaster narrates the consequences of the missed task. This usually follows intuitively from what the player was trying to do.

Whatever the case, the Loremaster must make sure that the task has a definite impact and produces consequences that cannot be ignored.

*If Beli failed his **Courtesy**, the chieftain might have taken Beli's curiosity as an insult, seeing an implicit accusation of theft in the words of the Dwarf, and reacted accordingly!*

Task Results:

Outcome	Effect	Notes
Failure	The Loremaster narrates the consequences of the failure.	Under most circumstances, a companion cannot repeat the same task he failed.
Success	The acting player achieves the stated objective.	-
Great success	The acting player describes how the result surpassed the expectations.	A great success takes half as long as a normal success.
Extraordinary success	The acting player describes how the result surpassed the expectations.	An extraordinary success takes a third as long as a normal success.



Test Resolution

Tests are used to resolve unexpected occurrences that befall the group of heroes during an adventure, from the effects of fatigue on a travelling adventurer to those of cursed gold on its unfortunate owner. Actions resolved as a result of the Loremaster's intervention (as opposed to actions instigated by the player) are dealt with as tests.

Announcing a Test

The Loremaster calls for a test when he needs to resolve a situation that directly challenges the abilities of the adventurers. Before a test can be resolved, the Loremaster must decide on a number of elements:

First, he announces who in the group is going to roll; then he determines the ability that will be tested.

Lifstan and Caranthir are marching on a path leading north from Beorn's House. When they finally approach a small patch of oak trees, the Loremaster announces that both adventurers must make an Awareness test.

The Loremaster should call for a test only when the players have a reasonable chance of failing it: if the test can plausibly be considered too easy, the Loremaster should treat it as an automatic action, letting the players succeed without wasting time on unnecessary rolls.

More importantly, before a test is called for, the Loremaster should consider the impact of both successful and unsuccessful outcomes. If a test must be succeeded in order for the adventure to carry on, then the action should probably not be presented as a test (and, importantly, the Loremaster should consider if the adventure is being presented in an appropriate way).

The Loremaster called for an Awareness test because a tree spirit is awakening in the oak grove that the characters are passing by. On a successful roll, characters feel invigorated by the barely audible musical singing (and gain a Hope point); on a failure, they perceive the tree-song as an eerie, sinister lament.

Setting the Difficulty

As with most actions, the Loremaster is in charge of setting the Target Number for the test. As is the case with tasks, tests are set by default at TN 14 unless the situation requires a different value.

Since it is a quiet, unremarkable day as far as visibility and hearing are concerned, the difficulty for the Awareness test is set at the usual TN 14.

If the test involves one or more major characters controlled by the Loremaster, the test might need to be resolved as an opposed roll (see page 148).

Difficulty Table:

TN	Difficulty (skill rank ♦♦♦)
10	Very Easy
12	Easy
14	Moderate
16	Hard
18	Severe
20	Daunting

Modifiers

When the Loremaster is done making his declaration, the players may employ a special ability or or a pertinent Trait, or choose to spend Hope to invoke an Attribute bonus.

Caranthir's player has it easy, as the Elf is 'Quick of Hearing'. The Trait is deemed appropriate and the test results in an automatic success.

Consequences

When the Loremaster and the players whose characters are taking part in the test have set the Target Number, the dice are rolled and their result is evaluated. There are two possible outcomes: the test was overcome or it failed.

In either instance the Loremaster narrates the outcome of the roll, as in most cases only he knows the reason why the test was announced. As previously stated, the Loremaster should always make sure that both a success or a failure produce tangible effects on the ensuing gameplay.

Typical Tests

Many dangerous situations require a hero to overcome a test to avoid negative consequences. Below are some common tests that the Loremaster can use to challenge the mettle of his players. Usually, heroes don't get additional benefits for overcoming tests with a greater degree of success: what really matters here is if they pass the test or if they fail it.

Corruption Tests

The Loremaster may call for a Corruption test when a hero faces something that could taint his spirit (see **Part Seven: The Shadow**).

A Corruption test is made using the Feat die plus a number of Success dice equal to the character's Wisdom rating.

Most of the time, the Target Number for the roll is 14, but it can be raised or lowered by the Loremaster depending on the severity of the source of corruption.

If the roll is successful, then the test has been passed, and the character does not suffer any negative consequences. If the roll is failed, the character gains a number of Shadow points based on the severity of the event (see page 222).

Players keep track of Shadow points by entering their current total in the smaller box found along the one used to record a character's Hope score on their character sheet.

Corruption tests are related to the Heart attribute and can profit from a Heart Attribute bonus.

Fatigue Tests

Every time that the company is journeying (see page 158), its members must pass one or more Fatigue tests.

A Fatigue test is accomplished by rolling the Feat die and a number of Success dice equal to a character's **Travel** skill rating.

The Target Number for all Fatigue tests is 14 (the Loremaster may use the table on page 158 to set the TN to a value representing the danger of the traversed areas).

Typical Tests:

Test Type	Rolled Ability	Attribute Bonus	Typical Conditions	Consequences of Failure
Corruption	Wisdom	Heart	When companion is subject to Anguish or is traversing a Blighted place.	Gain 1 Shadow, or more if threat is severe.
Fatigue	Travel	Heart	When on a journey.	Increase Fatigue by Encumbrance of Travelling gear
Fear	Valour	Heart	When facing a creature or a situation capable of provoking terror.	The companion is daunted and may not spend Hope while subject to a source of fear.
Orientation	Explore	Body	While adventuring.	Hero is confused and risks becoming lost.
Perception	Awareness or Insight	Pertinent Attribute	Awareness while in the open, Insight when dealing with another character.	Hero receives no information, or erroneous data.
Protection	Armour	Body	Caused by a Piercing blow. The TN is equal to the Injury of the weapon that hit.	The companion is Wounded.

TN for a test is generally 14, unless specified differently.

When a player-hero fails a Fatigue test, he increases his Fatigue score by a number equal to the Encumbrance value of his Travelling gear. If at least one player rolls an icon, a Hazard sequence has been triggered (whether the roll failed or not).

Fear Tests

Players make a Fear test when the adventurers face something capable of striking fear or terror into their hearts.

A Fear test is accomplished by rolling the Feat die and a number of Success dice equal to a character's Valour rating.

The difficulty for the roll is usually TN 14, but it can be raised or lowered by the Loremaster to better represent the level of threat.

If a player successfully overcomes the test, his character resists and doesn't flinch. If the roll is failed, the character is daunted and cannot spend Hope points for as long as the hero is subjected to the source of fear.

Fear tests are related to the Heart attribute and can profit from a Heart Attribute bonus.

Orientation Tests

The Loremaster may call for an Orientation test whenever there is a possibility that a character loses his sense of direction for any reason (for example the company is travelling across an unexplored area, or a hero is exploring a dark underground complex, or has been running after someone in a forest at night).

An Orientation test is made by rolling the Feat die plus a number of Success dice equal to a character's **Explore** skill rating.

If the roll is successful, then the test has been passed and the character makes sense of his surroundings and recovers his sense of direction. If the roll is failed, then the hero is confused and risks becoming lost.

Perception Tests

The Loremaster may ask for a Perception test whenever there is a chance that a hero might fail to perceive something significant in his surroundings or in an individual.

When the test is made to check whether the hero was able to perceive an unusual sound, sight or smell, the Perception test is accomplished by rolling the Feat die and a number of Success dice equal to a character's **Awareness** skill rating.

If the test is required to see if a hero notices anything unusual in the behaviour of another character, the Perception test is made by rolling the Feat die and a number of Success dice equal to a character's **Insight** skill rating instead.

Protection Tests

Whenever a hero is hit by a Piercing blow (an attack capable of inflicting lasting damage) he must make a Protection test to check whether his armour protected him from serious harm.

Players make a Protection test by rolling the Feat die plus a number of Success dice equal to the Protection value of their character's suit of armour, taking into consideration the bonus provided by any worn headgear.

The Target Number for the test is equal to the Injury rating of the weapon used by the attacker.

If the test is passed, the Piercing blow has been stopped; if the roll fails, then the hit has drawn blood and the character has been wounded (the player must check the **Wounded** box on the character sheet as a reminder).

Protection tests are related to the Body attribute and can profit from a Body Attribute bonus.

Detailed Die-Roll Sequence

A dice roll is required when any action might reasonably result in failure. All actions in the game are resolved using the following rules:

1. First, determine the ability to be used for the roll. If the action is a task, the ability is selected by the acting player; if the action is a test, the ability is chosen by the Loremaster.

2. The difficulty for the action is set by default at moderate (TN 14), unless the Loremaster or a specific rule indicates otherwise.

3. Depending on the circumstances a character possessing a pertinent Trait may be granted an automatic success by the Loremaster.

4. If the action is not automatic, the acting player rolls one Feat die, and a number of Success dice equal to his rating in the appropriate skill or other characteristic.

Special abilities. A hero's special abilities (Blessing, Virtue, Reward, etc.) might allow a player to roll the Feat die twice and keep the best result (players might find it handy to roll two Feat dice together, if they have them).

5. All numerical dice results are added up, to find the action result.

a. *Weariness.* If the acting character is Weary, all Success dice results in outline are ignored (in other words, they are considered to have given a result of zero).

b. *Attribute bonus.* A player may invoke an Attribute bonus and add the pertinent Attribute score (or favoured Attribute, if appropriate) to the rolled total.

6. If the total action result is equal or superior to the Target Number, the action is a success. If the result is lower than the Target Number, the test has been failed.

7. If the action was successful, the degree of success is found by counting how many ꞇ icons were produced by the roll: one ꞇ icon indicates a great success, two or more ꞇ icons an extraordinary success.

Advanced Action Resolution

The following paragraphs detail a number of advanced or optional methods to resolve actions that differ sensibly from typical tasks and tests.

Epic Feats

As rolling a ᚹ rune results in an automatic success, every player-hero has always at least one chance in twelve to succeed at any action attempt, no matter how arduous the challenge. This rule makes for faster action resolution, and helps in building a positive 'heroic' atmosphere for the game ("Can I shoot an arrow through the window slit to give a signal to my friends? Daunting difficulty? Cross your fingers, I'll try anyway...").

If the Loremaster wants to present his players with an extremely difficult task but also wants the different levels of abilities of the characters to be reflected in their chances of success, he may present the action as an Epic feat.

An Epic feat is an action considered to have a Target Number set beyond the capability of any player to match or beat, but that can be overcome if the player attempting it rolls a ᚹ rune AND at least one special icon ꞇ.

Only actions attempted in the face of overwhelming odds and that add drama and excitement to the story should be made into Epic feats. The adventure definitely shouldn't be structured to rely on a player succeeding at an Epic feat, and the Loremaster shouldn't punish a player who fails at one.

An Epic feat should be inserted in the game only if the story benefits from simply allowing a hero to attempt it.

Picking a Stone-Troll's pockets or stealing something from the hoard of a sleeping Dragon without leaving a trace are good examples of Epic feats. Succeeding at an Epic feat should be considered a phenomenal achievement, beyond the normal tiers used to define the quality of a success (simple, great or extraordinary success).

Opposed Actions

When a character is attempting to accomplish something in direct opposition with another hero, or when the goal of the action is resisted by a major Loremaster character, the action roll becomes an opposed roll (when an action roll is opposed by an individual of lesser relevance than heroes and major characters, it should be solved normally by rolling against a Target Number).

Opposed tests are resolved in two ways, depending on the circumstances:

A character attempts an action, and another character then tries to nullify its outcome. The contestants might use different abilities, or the same one, depending on the nature of the opposed roll.

Examples: a hero hides to spy upon a Loremaster character who might discover him (Stealth vs. Awareness); an adventurer addresses a listener to rouse him to action while another orator tries to calm his spirits (Persuade vs. Persuade).

When this happens, the active character rolls first to see if he succeeds in the first place: the action is resolved normally, by rolling against a TN. If the roll fails, then the second character succeeds automatically. If the acting character succeeds, the challenging character rolls against the same TN: if the roll fails, then the consequences of the acting character's roll are resolved; if it succeeds, the two successful results are compared and the better roll takes effect (see below).

If the action features a direct confrontation, then all individuals involved roll simultaneously. Again, the contestants might use different abilities, or the same one, depending on the nature of the opposed roll.

Examples: One character is discussing a learnt topic while another challenges him with witty remarks in front of an audience (Lore vs. Riddle), or two characters are arm-wrestling (Athletics vs. Athletics).

When this happens, all rolls are resolved simultaneously and their results compared (see below). If both rolls fail, roll again or, if more appropriate, the contest is tied.

Comparing Opposed Results

When two characters have both scored a successful roll, their results are compared and the roll that scored the higher quality of success is applied to the action:

The character who obtained the highest number of ᴛ icons on his roll is considered to have overcome the opposition.

Ties are broken by comparing the results obtained on the Feat die roll, where a roll of ᚹ is the highest possible result for player-heroes and other characters belonging to the Free Peoples, and a roll of 👁 is the highest possible result for monsters and characters serving the Shadow.

Repeating an Action

A die roll made to resolve a normal action doesn't necessarily indicate a single act, but possibly a series of efforts (for example, an attack roll doesn't generally simulate a single sword swing). When a player succeeds or fails at a roll he has just resolved his hero's best attempt at doing something.

In other words, players are not allowed to repeat a die roll aimed to resolve the same action.

This is one of the reasons why choosing whether or not to spend a Hope point on an action attempt is such a critical one: the acting player is not going to get a second chance.

Prolonged Actions

The Loremaster may determine that an action requires more than one roll to be completed. This usually happens when a challenge is more aptly represented as a series of rolls, with each successful roll representing a step towards its final achievement. For example, digging a tunnel or persuading a council of elders could be a prolonged effort, with each successful attempt bringing the company of heroes closer to the accomplishment of the overall task.

The number of successful rolls required should be set by the Loremaster before players start to roll their dice, and should be between 3 (a moderately complicated test) and 9 successful rolls (a difficult and time-consuming affair).

The Loremaster should reward players whose rolls have produced a superior level of success by equating a great success to two successful rolls, and an extraordinary success to three successful rolls.

When to use Prolonged Actions

Prolonged actions are particularly suited to evoke an atmosphere of tension, but may also be employed when the acting characters want to tackle a difficult task with caution, and have time to do it.

When a conventional action is turned into a prolonged action, the TN is lowered and the number of rolls required to complete the attempt is increased.

When turning a conventional action into a prolonged one, the Loremaster should apply the following guidelines:

- **TN reduced by one level:** the action now requires 3 successful rolls.
- **TN reduced by two levels:** the action now requires 4 or 5 successful rolls;
- **TN reduced by three levels:** the action now requires 6 or more successful rolls.

A prolonged action may also be called upon to present a challenge that would be otherwise translated only by choosing an excessive target number. A high TN, especially with a group of relatively inexperienced characters, may produce a series of failed rolls quickly leading to frustration or, on the contrary, could see the characters winning too easily, thanks to a single and anticlimactic lucky roll.

For example, finding the exit of a maze is better presented as a prolonged action with a TN of 14 requiring six successful Riddle rolls to figure out, than making it a single test with a TN of 20.

Cooperating on a Prolonged Action

By their very nature, prolonged actions allow for multiple attempts, whether they are been resolved by the same character, or by more than one character acting together or in succession.

The precise details of a prolonged action might allow a group of heroes to use different skills toward the same goal, for example heroes trying to impress an audience (use of different personality skills), or entertaining a guest (use of different custom skills). The TN for different skill rolls could be the same, mirroring the general difficulty of the situation, or be adjusted to reflect the relative appropriateness of the chosen skills to the goal of the action.

Examples of Prolonged Actions

The table opposite provides examples of prolonged actions, including a suggested number of successful rolls required to complete them. The second table contains directions on how to adjudicate the consequences of failed rolls made while attempting to complete a prolonged action.

Prolonged Actions:

Action	Required rolls	Suggested skills	Cooperation
Breaking down a sturdy door	3	Athletics	Max 3 characters
Convincing an unwilling individual to help	5	Persuade, Awe, Courtesy	*Allowed*
Researching obscure lore	4	Lore, Riddle, Song	*Allowed*
Finding the way again when lost in the wild	4	Explore, Hunting	*Allowed*
Swimming across a wide river	5	Athletics	*Not allowed*
Scouting a wide area	4 to 6	Explore	*Allowed*

A great success equates to 2 successful rolls, and an extraordinary success to 3 successful rolls.

Failing Rolls in Prolonged Actions:

Failure result in...	Effect	Examples
A simple delay	Achieving the action will take longer. The resolution of the action continues.	Most actions attempted while not under stress.
An inconvenience	A minor negative consequence takes place. The resolution of the action continues.	A difficult climb (the climber falls a short distance, suffering a minor loss of Endurance), swimming across a river (gain a point of Fatigue), extinguishing a fire (lose Endurance for suffocation), and so on.
Complete failure	The prolonged action fails completely, and cannot be resumed. (This happens especially if a hero fails producing a result).	A very dangerous climb (the climber falls), trying to sneak past a sleeping Dragon (the Dragon is alerted), a lengthy riddle contest (the character loses the contest), and so on.

The Passage of Time

When the Loremaster is helping his players to resolve actions, he might sometimes need to take into consideration the passage of time. In a narrative game like *The One Ring*, it is difficult to provide detailed rules concerning how long it takes to do something, as a single die roll may be used to represent several attempts at an action (trying to persuade someone during a lengthy council) or a single, brief effort taking a few moments (trying to prevent someone from jumping off a cliff in desperation): the Loremaster will be often required to exercise some common sense when trying to determine how long it takes a hero to do something.

Time and Quality of Success

A great or extraordinary success could mean that an action took less time to complete than it would have with an ordinary success: As a rule of thumb, a great success takes approximately half as long as a normal success, and an extraordinary success takes a third as long as a normal success.

Preliminary Rolls

Adventurers learn fast that if they want to survive when out in the Wild, they better be prepared, whether they are leaving to go on a journey, or when facing the enemy in combat, or even when meeting strangers in an encounter upon the road.

At the beginning of any one of the three main heroic ventures (journeys, combat and encounters), all players are entitled to make a preliminary skill roll against TN 14 to determine their character's preparedness.

Every type of heroic venture targets a specific skill (see below), but the results are interpreted in the same way: based on the quality of the result, every successful roll grants a hero a number of bonus Success dice (advantages) to use in the coming endeavour.

Each ordinary success grants the player 1 Success die, a great success grants 2 dice, while an extraordinary success grants 3 dice.

How to use bonus Success dice

Heroes may spend their bonus Success dice to boost their rolls during the ensuing endeavour.

When a player is about to make a roll, he may add 1 bonus Success die to the roll. To add the die, he may spend 1 of his own bonus dice, or another player may spend it to give it to him.

Commonly, heroes spend their bonus Success dice on their TRAVEL rolls when journeying, on their attack rolls or Protection tests when fighting, and on any useful roll during encounters.

During the same turn, a player may spend 1 or more of the dice in his reserve at any time (for his own roll or to help others), but any roll may be modified by a maximum of 1 bonus Success die.

Journey Advantages

When the company has chosen the road they intend to follow to reach their destination, all players may make a roll of LORE to check if their characters know something useful about the lands they are going to traverse.

Every successful LORE roll grants a hero a number of bonus Success dice to use during the journey — the companion leaves with the proper gear, or having planned the most appropriate course, or having listened to the best counsellors.

Combat Advantages

Before combat at close quarters is joined, all players may make a roll of BATTLE to determine if their characters spot features of the battleground that may be exploited to gain an edge over their foes.

Every successful BATTLE roll grants a hero a number of bonus Success dice to use during the ensuing fight — the hero will exploit the battlefield or the weather conditions to gain an edge, for example repairing to a convenient spot to cover his back, or kicking a fire to raise a cloud of sparks at the right moment.

Encounter Advantages

At the beginning of an encounter, all players may attempt an INSIGHT roll to determine if their characters are able to divine the most appropriate course of action.

Every successful INSIGHT roll grants a hero a number of bonus Success dice to use during the ensuing encounter — the companion evaluates the people he is facing, trying to glean useful information from their disposition and behaviour.

- Journeys -

There were many paths that led up into those mountains, and many passes over them. But most of the paths were cheats and deceptions and led nowhere or to bad ends...

The company will often roam across Wilderland during the course of their adventures. But travelling is not simply a means of getting to a destination. A great part of the life of a hero is spent on the road. Often, what distinguishes an adventurer from a common villager is the skills they possess to help them survive while on a journey.

Travelling shows a hero the world outside the boundaries of his native lands, and lets him seek out and confront threats to his people. In short, a journey in *The One Ring* is synonymous with adventuring.

A journey can be seen as a stretch of narrative time dividing two episodes. During this time, the Loremaster requires a number of skill tests from all companions, to represent the hardships they face, and to determine how they affect the performance of the adventurers when the next episode starts.

Finally, a journey sequence may trigger unexpected events, if the adventurers trigger a Hazard episode.

Journey Rules

The rules for journey resolution help the Loremaster to make travelling a significant part of an adventure. These rules can be used either to quickly summarise the effects of a journey on a group of travellers and allow the Loremaster to rapidly resume play with what befalls the adventurers when they reach their destination, or to play out the trip in detail. Travelling requires the use of a number of dedicated abilities whose use adds variety to the game and can provide many interesting story hooks.

While it is not necessary to use these rules every time that the company is travelling, they are very helpful in giving substance and meaning to an important element of adventuring that is too often overlooked.

The Adventurer's Map

As obvious as it may seem, the members of a travelling company must at least know approximately where their destination is to be found to be able to reach it. At the end of the Third Age, Wilderland is a dangerous place and the folks inhabiting it have been long sundered from each other, to the point that most people do not know the precise whereabouts of places just a few days away – if they don't ignore their existence completely.

Most adventurers are a bit more knowledgeable, even at the start of their careers, as represented by the Adventurer's Map shown on page 18 (all adventurers are of course considered to be familiar with their places of origin).

Players should update their geographical lore during play by taking notes or by writing directly on the map itself,

adding the places they visit and recording the routes they have travelled during the game.

When the players have decided on a destination, they need to choose the best route to get there. Using their map, they indicate the general route that they intend to follow, and the Loremaster advises how long it will take them to complete it and how many rolls will be required.

The hardships and difficulties encountered by the heroes when traversing the Wild are represented in the game by Fatigue tests.

The number of tests is based on the length of the journey, on the area and terrain traversed, and on the season in which the journey is taking place (journeys in the cold months of the year require more rolls than the warm ones). All the information and rules required to calculate the length and difficulty of a journey can be found later in this section.

It is summer, and the company intends to reach the Dwarven fortress in the Iron Hills from the town of Dale. The company will be travelling on foot. After making his calculations, the Loremaster says that the journey will cover approximately 140 miles, will take 11 days and require two Fatigue tests.

Travelling Companions

An experienced company differs from a random group of adventurers in the capability of its members to collaborate effectively. When they are travelling, the companions usually divide up some of the duties according to ability.

Players assign their characters a role for the journey, roughly summarising what their characters will be doing for the length of the trip.

The duty chosen for a character comes into play when an result on a Fatigue test triggers a Hazard sequence (see Hazard Episodes, page 160). For example, if the track disappears into a bog, the company's Scout will be the first to stumble across it.

With the exception of the company's Guide, more than one player-hero may be assigned the same role (in other words, there may be more than one character acting as Look-outs, or more heroes going hunting regularly), but normally no character may assume more than one role at the same time (posing as the group's Huntsman AND Scout, for example).

In time, players will probably assign the various roles on a permanent basis as they discover which character works best in each role.

Travelling Companions:

#	Role*	Function
1	Guide	In charge of all decisions concerning route, rest, and supplies.
2	Scout	In charge of setting up camp, opening new trails.
3	Huntsman	In charge of finding food in the wild.
4	Look-out Man	In charge of keeping watch.

*No companion may assume more than one role, but there may be more characters for any role except the Guide.

Guide

One companion should have the responsibility of guiding the group during the journey. The Guide of the company is responsible for decisions, such as when the group should stop for a rest or how to manage their reserves of food.

- The main asset of a good Guide is a superior **Travel** skill.

Scouts

A character acting as a Scout can be called upon to find a suitable location for setting up camp, or when a situation forces the company to abandon the road it was following to find a new one. Leaving a well-trodden path is difficult

and dangerous, involving climbing up steep hills, wading wide streams or scaling doubtful paths along cliff-sides.

- A good Scout is characterised by a decent **Explore** skill.

Huntsmen

When travelling with haste, a company can soon run out of provisions, especially when completing a journey that is going to take several weeks.

- A companion skilled at **Hunting** is always ready to track prey into the woods before making camp.

Look-out Men

A journey brings a company through wildly different territories, most of them dangerous. The Look-out Man is a vital duty that often puts a hero in the position of saving the lives of all members of a group, or of dooming them all through inattention.

- The Look-out Man's skill is **Awareness**, usually tested at the Loremaster's request.

Journey Resolution

Once the players have completed their planning, made their destination and route known, and assigned roles, the Loremaster should then apply the following five steps:

Journey Resolution:

Step	Action	Procedure
1	Set route	Players trace their route on the Adventurer's Map. If practical, divide the journey into shorter legs.
2	Distance	Find the distance counting the hexes on the Loremaster's Map (10 miles per hex).
3	Terrain	Multiply distance by terrain modifier (see table on page 156). Make separate calculations for each leg, then add up all results.
4	Speed	Find the expected duration of the journey by dividing the modified distance by the speed of the company (see table on page 158).
5	Fatigue Tests	Determine number of Fatigue tests. Based on the season, each companion must pass a test for each full or partial number of days shown on table on page 158.

1. Set Route

As soon as the company has made a decision to reach a specific destination, the players should use their map of Wilderland to show the Loremaster the road they intend to follow.

Trotter and his companions recently stopped by the Old Ford on the Great River. Now they are going south, to Rhosgobel, as they want to get in touch with Radagast the Brown. The players locate the locations on their map, and show the Loremaster the route they intend to follow.

If a company is travelling for a week or more across different terrain types or traversing several regions, the Loremaster

could consider splitting the itinerary into a number of legs, making the calculations and rolls for each leg separately. The sample journeys described on page 163 show several examples of journeys divided into separate legs.

2. Distance

To measure the distance the company will travel the Loremaster should use the map on the page opposite. He counts the number of hexes separating the two locations (1 hex represents 10 miles), including the hexagon containing the destination, but not the one containing the starting point.

To get to Rhosgobel, the company might walk along the southern eaves of Mirkwood. The Loremaster finds that the distance between the two landmarks is equal to 15 hexes (corresponding to 150 miles).

The Loremaster must consider that travel distances should rarely be measured 'as the crow flies,' connecting the starting point to the destination in a straight line, but taking into due consideration the lie of the land instead. For example, high mountain ranges and swift-running rivers can be traversed only through passes or over bridges or fords.

3. Terrain

Following a well-trod path or an ancient road makes for steadier progress than trudging over hilly ground or through a marsh. For this reason, the Loremaster checks which type of terrain the company traverses for the majority of the journey (at least half the distance) and then multiplies the total distance travelled by the appropriate modifier from the table below.

Trotter and his friends will be walking for 150 miles along tracks and ancient paths in the green vales of the Great River; the area is considered open terrain, and thus gets a multiplier of x1 (leaving the 'effective' mileage unchanged).

Terrain Difficulty:

Map Key	Difficulty	The traversed terrain is mostly...	Modifier
-	very easy	good road*	x0.5
	easy	open terrain, well-trodden track or path, plains, meadows, on a boat along a navigable river	x1
	moderate	pathless wilderness, hills, sparse woods, bogs	x1,5
	hard	marshes, wastes, fells, woods with good tracks**	x2
	severe	dense woods, very rough ground, any road or path in Mirkwood**	x3
	daunting	densest wood, desert, blighted or ruined land, mountain passes	x5

*Travelling across a distance on a good road gives a modifier of x0.5, halving the time needed to cover the entire route, regardless of the terrain the road traverses.

**A company cannot advance through woods or dense woods riding horses. The travelling characters must dismount and proceed by leading their horses on foot.

The One Ring
- Wilderland -
Grey Mountains
Withered Heath
Elves of Mirkwood
Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain
Bardings
Beornings
Woodmen
Gobbin
to The Shire
East Bight
to Dorwinion
Dol Guldur
Running River
Free Lands
Border Lands
Wild Lands
Shadow Lands
Dark Lands
Easy
Moderate
Hard
Severe
Daunting
Impassable
Miles
0
50
100
150
N

4. Speed

The Loremaster now divides the distance measured in the previous steps by the travelling speed of the company – rounding all fractions to the nearest whole number. The result is equal to the expected length of the journey in days. The table below shows the distance covered in miles by a company in an average day of travel:

The Bride, Trotter and the others will walk for 8 days before they arrive at the house of the Brown Wizard.

Speed:

Company travelling...	Miles per day
On foot	20 miles
Riding horses	40 miles
Using boats on a river	20 miles downstream 5-10 miles against the current

5. Fatigue Tests

Journeys can be arduous, and there is a chance that the adventurers become wearied before they get to their destination.

Toilsome complications like crossing a freezing stream in winter, cutting a new path across the undergrowth in the suffocating heat of summer, or avoiding getting lost in a thick autumn fog are represented in the game by a number of Fatigue tests imposed on the companions.

The number of Fatigue tests is based on the duration of the journey (as calculated above) and the weather conditions of the season (see the Season table below).

- Each companion must make a *Fatigue* test (roll **Travel**) for each full or partial number of days shown in the table that the characters travel for (see *Making Fatigue Tests* below for the consequences of passing or failing a roll).

Season:

Season	One Fatigue Test every...
Winter	3 days
Spring	5 days
Summer	6 days
Autumn	4 days

If the company is travelling in winter, the journey to Rhosgobel will require three Fatigue tests.

The Target Number of each Fatigue test is usually 14. If the Loremaster prefers to reflect the characteristics of the traversed region in the difficulty of the roll, he can use the Region table below (the same table can be used to affect the TN of any roll concerning actions accomplished when on a journey).

For journeys crossing different areas, the Loremaster should apply the Target Number that characterises the longest part of the route. If the journey requires multiple rolls, the Loremaster may attribute different TNs to some of the rolls, to better represent the difficulty of traversing different areas.

Region Table:

Region type	Map Icon	TN	Difficulty
Free lands	ᚢ	12	easy
Border lands	ᚠ	14	moderate
Wild lands	Ψ	16	hard
Shadow lands	λ	18	severe
Dark lands	ᛟ	20	daunting

Assign Journey Advantages

When the Loremaster has determined the final length of the journey in days and the number of tests required to complete it, all players attempt a **Lore** roll to gain bonus Success dice (see Preliminary Rolls at page 151).

Making Fatigue Tests

Travelling companions face all sorts of difficulties, and must account for the additional weight and inconvenience of things like sleeping cots or blankets, food rations and such like. Fatigue tests are required to check whether the gear carried by each hero has proven too burdensome, or if they ended up encountering unexpected complications.

Players resolve their **Travel** rolls at the same time. In the case of a journey requiring multiple tests, the Loremaster should intersperse the required rolls (and their consequences) across the length of his narrative.

- When a player-hero fails a Fatigue test, he immediately increases his Fatigue score by a number equal to the Encumbrance value of his Travelling gear.
- Additionally, if at least one player attempting a Fatigue test produces an icon (whether the roll failed or not) a Hazard episode occurs (see below).

As seen on page 77, the Encumbrance rating of a character's Travelling gear depends on the season during which the journey is taking place, and is equal to 3 points during the cold months of a year, and to 2 point during spring and summer.

Fatigue Tests (roll Travel):

Attribute Bonus	Test Failed	For
Heart	Raise Fatigue by 3 in autumn and winter, 2 in summer and spring (Travelling gear).*	A Hazard has been triggered: roll to choose a role, and then to pick a Hazard (see page 160-161)

Reduce by 1 the Fatigue increase of each failed roll if travelling with ponies or on boats. TN is 14, or is based on the table on page 158.

Recovering from Fatigue

To recover from a Fatigue rating increase, heroes must rest in a safe place (i.e. not "on the road"):

- For every prolonged rest taken into a reasonably sheltered refuge, a hero reduces his Fatigue increase by one point.

Generally, heroes cannot find a safe refuge until they reach the end of the journey. A journey may be considered ended when the company reaches its intended destination, when the gameplay definitely leaves narrative time and the players take part in a full-fledged episode, or when some change of plan or unexpected occurrence interrupts the journey to engage the company in a different activity for a significant amount of time.

- As a rule of thumb, any interruption that carries some narrative weight or that is likely to last about three days or more is generally considered significant and thus to have put an end to the journey.

Ponies and Boats

When travelling, companions may ease their toil by bringing ponies, or may journey on boats when along a river, lake or sea.

If the company travels aboard boats or is equipped with ponies, reduce by 1 the amount of Fatigue generated by each failed Fatigue test (the Fatigue increase becomes 2 points in winter and autumn, and 1 during spring and summer).

Companions looking for a ride must start their journey in a settlement of the Free Peoples. Additionally, the adventurers must be able to afford the expense, according to their current Standard of Living and the table below:

Standard of Living	Expense
Poor	May not afford the expense.
Frugal	May not afford the expense.
Martial	May borrow one pony or boat if in region of origin.
Prosperous	May afford to pay for one companion.
Rich	May afford to pay for two companions.

Hazard Episodes

Many misfortunes may attend a group of adventurers out in the Wild. Food transported by the company members might have been lost or spoiled, a water supply might prove to be insufficient, or a track might disappear into a bog that didn't appear on any map. Hazards range from simple problems such as these, to difficult and potentially deadly challenges such as escaping from a ravenous pack of Wargs.

For each icon produced on the Feat die while making Fatigue tests, a Hazard episode has been triggered (whether the test that produced the icon was a failure or not).

When this happens, the Loremaster employs the sequence described below to determine the nature of each Hazard episode and its consequences, once for every icon produced .

Select the Target

Usually, a Hazard episode requires one or more players to overcome a test. Each test is associated with one of the four roles that heroes can perform when on a journey (Guide, Scout, Huntsman or Look-out).

The Loremaster selects which role will face the challenge and which ability will be tested by rolling a Feat die and using the table below.

Hazards Target:

Feat die	Role challenged	Must pass a Test of...
ᚹ	Players' choice	-
1-3	Guide	Travel
4-5	Scout	Explore
6-7	Huntsman	Hunting
8-9	Look-out Man	Awareness
10	All companions	Varies, or default to a **Corruption** test for each companion.
👁	Role not covered (if available)	-

Spend one Hope to join in a test (more companions may roll, but only one success is required to pass the challenge). TN is 14, or is based on the table on page 158.

Determine the Consequences of Failure

The Loremaster determines what will be the consequences of the Hazard episode, should a companion fail the challenge posed by it. The Loremaster selects the consequences by rolling a Feat die and using the table on the followig page.

Hazards:

Feat die	Effect	Consequences for the Failing Companion
ᚹ	Roll again	-
1-2	Weariness	Temporarily Weary for the length of journey.
3	Misery	Temporarily Miserable for the length of journey.
4-5	Fatigue	Add Fatigue again, twice on an 👁.
6	Wound	Lose Endurance equal to Success die result, or suffer a Wound on an 👁.
7	Corruption	Gain 1 Shadow, or 2 Shadow on an 👁.
8	Strain	Lose Endurance equal to Success die result.
9	Despair	Lose 1 point of Hope, or 2 Hope on an 👁.
10	Wrong Choices	Raise TN one level for further Fatigue tests.
👁	Dangerous Meeting	The Loremaster improvises a combat encounter.

Describe the Hazard

Once the companion (or companions) who is the protagonist of the Hazard episode has been selected and the consequences of failure determined, the Loremaster improvises a short narration. As always, the aim of the Loremaster is to help the players visualize the scene and the challenge to overcome.

Make the Roll

Check if at least one character has been assigned to the role selected for the Hazard prior to the start of the journey. If no hero assumed the selected role, any companion may spend one point of Hope and be allowed to make the roll (players should remember that there can be only one hero acting as the Guide for the company). If no one volunteers, the test fails automatically.

If more than one character has been assigned to the challenged role, then they may all attempt the test – but still only one successful outcome will be necessary to overcome it. The difficulty of all skill rolls is TN 14. If the Loremaster prefers to reflect the characteristics of the traversed region, he may refer to the Region table found at page 158. If the rolling player passes the test, then the companion endures the difficulties encountered, and the journey may continue. If the roll fails, the hero faces the consequences of his shortcoming.

Sample Hazard Episodes

The examples listed below show the Loremaster how a Hazard episode should be presented. Each episode title proposes in brackets the role targeted by the accident and the consequences of failure, as determined by the table. Most descriptions depict the Hazard episode in broad strokes: the Loremaster should tailor a Hazard event to the current adventure and its circumstances.

Lost Direction (Guide — *Weariness*)
The guide has lost the path he was meant to follow and scrambles to recover the lost trail to keep heading in the right direction while traversing a trackless area.

Uncomfortable Lodgings (All Companions — *Wrong Choices*)
The heroes have made poor choices regarding where to camp and find a shelter for the night. On a failure, the companions sleep miserably and will face harder Fatigue tests.

Cruel Weather (Scout — *Strain*)
The company is surprised by the changing weather and is repeatedly caught in the open by rain or snow. On a failure, the Scout loses Endurance as he continuously work vainly to find shelter.

Monsters Roused (Look-out — *Dangerous Meeting*)
The company travels close to the lair of a perilous monster or a colony of wicked creatures. On a failure, monsters are made aware of the company's presence before any companion realises that a threat is imminent, and attack.

From Hunter to Prey (Huntsman — *Wound*)
A dangerous predator has followed the tracks or the scent of a hunting companion. On a failure, the Huntsman is attacked by an unusually dangerous creature.

Scanty Provisions (All companions — Misery)
The reserves of food have been spoilt, or prove to be too scarce. On a failure, the mood of the company is ruined for the rest of the journey.

No way forward (Scout — Fatigue)
The company faces an unexpected obstacle in its path and the Scout must go out of his way to find a better path to follow.

Worn with Sorrow and Toil (All companions — Corruption)
The company travels across a region tainted by the corrupting touch of the Shadow. All companions make a Corruption test.

Using Hobbit Tales

If the Loremaster owns a copy of *Hobbit Tales from the Green Dragon Inn*, then the deck of cards contained within may be used to randomly generate a Hazard episode instead of the rules presented here. Page 14 of the Hobbit Tales rules explains how this mechanic works.

Actions while Travelling

When the Loremaster is using this rules to deal with a group of travelling adventurers, he might need to determine how many action attempts a hero can make while on the road.

During an average day of travel, players are entitled to make a maximum of two die rolls (basically, one action attempt in the morning and one in the afternoon).

A hero who is looking for signs of the recent passage of Orcs along the path he is treading may be allowed two Hunting rolls a day.

Recovering Endurance while Travelling

A companion may be forced by the circumstances to start a journey while still recovering from injuries or harm. Moreover, an unexpected event may inflict a loss of Endurance along the journey itself — for example, as the consequences of a Hazard episode. Due to the general discomfort of the travelling accomodations, an injured companion will find it much harder to rest and recover while on a journey.

Travelling heroes recover a reduced number of Endurance points for every prolonged rest they enjoy. As usual, the amount depends on the current health of the character:

- A Wounded hero with an untreated injury does not recover any Endurance while travelling.
- A wounded hero with a treated injury recovers 1 Endurance point.
- An uninjured hero recovers 2 Endurance points.

The companions resume their normal pace of recovery when they reach the end of the journey and finally get to rest in a safe place (for a precise definition of a 'safe place', see Recovering form Fatigue at page 159):

Encounters

A Journey is arguably the most appropriate moment to present the company with an unforeseen meeting with new characters, including important personalities.

An encounter is almost never the product of a random die result, and is usually part of the Loremaster's plans for the current Adventuring phase (although it might be improvised, based on the circumstances faced by the company).

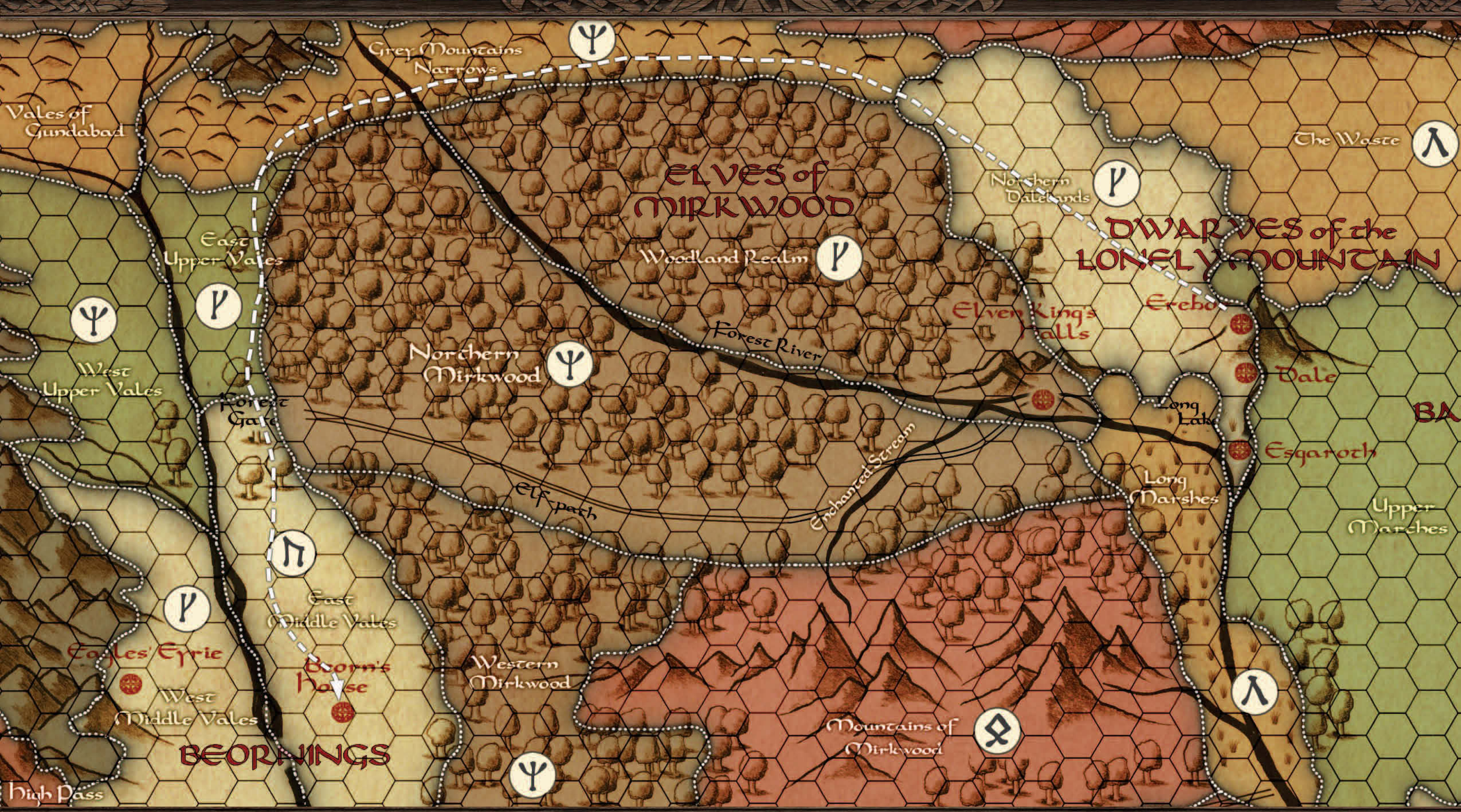
Unexpected meetings made during a Journey can be resolved following the encounter sequence presented on page 185.

Sample Journeys

Below are some sample routes that every group of companions will likely undertake at some time in their adventuring career. All journey lengths are indicated in days of march unless otherwise specified.

From the Lonely Mountain to Beorn's House

They intended to go along the edge of the forest, and round its northern end in the waste that lay between it and the beginning of the Grey Mountains.



This is the route Bilbo took after the Battle of Five Armies to reach the house of Beorn. It covers a distance of more than 130 leagues (400+ miles), across different types of terrain.

First leg: Northern Dalelands (Border Land)
90 miles across open terrain (5 days).

Fatigue tests: 2 (Winter), 1 (Spring), 1 (Summer), 2 (Autumn).

Second leg: Grey Mountains Narrows (Wild Land)
170 miles across wasteland (17 days).

Fatigue tests: 6 (Winter), 4 (Spring), 3 (Summer), 5 (Autumn).

Third leg: from the Upper Anduin Vales to the House of Beorn (Border Land, Free Land)
50 miles across rugged terrain and 80 miles across open terrain (8 days).

Fatigue tests: 3 (Winter), 2 (Spring), 2 (Summer), 2 (Autumn).

From the Halls of the Elvenking to Lake-town

...he hastened now down the river to the Long Lake. He had not boats or rafts enough for his host, and they were forced to go the slower way by foot...

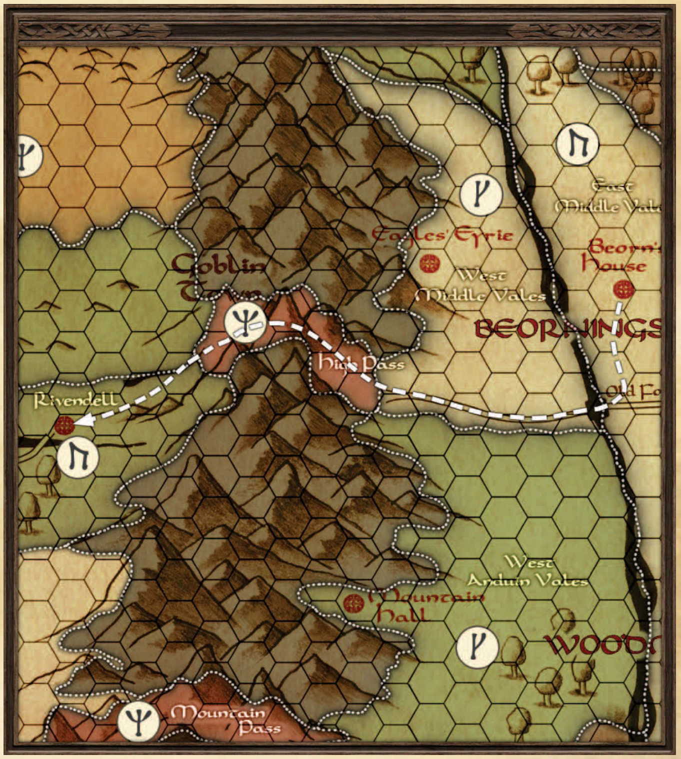
This journey covers the distance that the Elvenking travelled on foot along the Forest River when he went to the rescue of the Lake-men after the destruction of their town by Smaug. The trek sees a company travelling across the upper portion of the Long Marshes for 50 miles.

From Mirkwood to the Long Lake (Border Land, Shadow Land)
10 miles across dense woods, forty miles across marshes (6 days).

Fatigue tests: 2 (Winter), 2 (Spring), 1 (Summer), 2 (Autumn).

From Beorn's House to Rivendell

At last they came up the long road, and reached the very pass where the Goblins had captured them before.



This journey brings a company from the house of Beorn to the Last Homely House on the other side of the Misty Mountains, going across the Old Ford. It covers a distance of 190 miles.

First leg: to the High Pass (Free Land, Border Land)
30 miles across open terrain to the Old Ford, 60 miles on road to the mountains' feet (3 days).

Fatigue test: 1 (any season).

Second leg: Across the High Pass (Wild Land)
60 miles across mountain path (15 days of march).

Fatigue tests: 5 (Winter), 3 (Spring), 3 (Summer), 4 (Autumn).

Fourth leg: to the Last Homely House (Border Land)
40 miles across rugged terrain (3 days of march).

Fatigue test: 1 (any season).

From the Lonely Mountain to the Iron Hills

... he began reckoning the distance to the Iron Hills and how long it would be before Dáin could reach the Lonely Mountain...

This journey traces the route going from Erebor to the Dwarven settlement in the Iron Hills, following (backwards) the road taken by Dáin when he answered Thorin Oakenshield's call for help.

From Erebor to the Iron Hills (Wild Land)
140 miles across rugged terrain (11 days).

Fatigue tests: 4 (Winter), 3 (Spring), 2 (Summer), 3 (Autumn).

- Combat -

There was a ring and clatter as the company drew their swords.

Part of the reason heroes join a company is strength in numbers: a party composed of diversely talented adventurers has a far better chance of survival out in the wild or deep under the mountains than individual fighters. When a company is forced into combat, each companion find supports from the other members of his group.

Combat is a common occurrence in the career of any adventurer, but its frequency doesn't make it in any way an ordinary experience: the life of a hero and that of his companions is at stake, and they can consider themselves fortunate if they see the end of even a victorious fight without someone suffering from the consequences of the blows they received.

In the books, the episodes featuring fights and battles vary wildly in presentation, as they are set in diverse locations and are born out of differing narrative needs. When he is setting up a combat encounter, the Loremaster should try to accomplish the same results as the books, and use all violent confrontations as means to an end. By threatening the companions with death, the Loremaster is giving the players the opportunity to demonstrate the heroic stature of their characters; by putting their lives in danger, he is making the grim desperation of the times they are living in much more real, giving depth and context to whatever else the characters are trying to achieve in their lives.

In the game, one in every two sessions of play will probably see at least one combat encounter. Whenever such a situation arises, the normal flow of play is interrupted, as the Loremaster and players collaborate in creating a tense description of how the heroes and their foes confront each other. As combat moves quickly and a lot happens in a short space of time, there are a few extra rules to help keep the action flowing.

Onset of Combat

Combat is a dramatic and momentous event for a group of players, a recurring gameplay motif that should not have its significance dulled by simple repetition.

During the opening phase of combat, called the onset, the Loremaster defines and details a number of elements to ensure that all battles do not end up feeling the same.

While some of these elements are fundamental, and must be necessarily determined for all combat encounters, other elements can be selected by the Loremaster only when he deems it necessary. The Loremaster should always ground his choices in the ongoing story, paying particular attention to the input of players and their choices for strategies.

#	Step	Page
1	Resolve surprise attacks.	167
2	Determine initiative.	170
3	Assign combat advantages.	170
4	Resolve opening volleys.	171
End of Onset	Proceed to close quarters.	171

1. Surprise Attacks

It can happen that the group of player-heroes is caught by surprise by a foe that successfully waylaid the company, perhaps because of a carefully plotted ruse, or that the company succeeds in springing a trap upon unsuspecting enemies.

In all cases, the Loremaster should consider the circumstances, and first decide whether a test should be required to resolve the situation or not; for example, a planned ambush made against completely unaware enemies without individuals on watch can let the opposition attack automatically with the benefit of complete surprise. If the Loremaster considers that a test is required, then he should always let the players make the roll, whether they are being ambushed or are ambushing someone.

Being Ambushed

When the company is being ambushed, the Loremaster should call for a test of **Awareness** from all players. Other plausible choices for the test can be the **Battle** skill (representing a soldier's preparation) or **Hunting** when in the wild (especially if the ambush is being attempted by a wild creature). The Target Number for the action can be set at 14, or the Loremaster can select a difficulty from the Being Ambushed table.

A companion who fails the test has been completely caught off-guard by the sudden aggression and is surprised.

A surprised companion doesn't get to roll **Battle** to gain combat advantages (see Preliminary Rolls, on page 151) and is not allowed to make opening volley rolls.

Situation	Surprise Test	Failure	Notes
The company is ambushed.	Heroes roll Awareness, Battle or Hunting.	Surprised! Companion cannot roll for combat advantages or opening volleys.	Warn another companion on a [icon] or two companions on a [icon][icon].
Ambushing enemies.	Heroes roll Stealth, Battle or Hunting.	All companions must pass the test or the ambush fails.	Assist another companion on a [icon] or two companions on a [icon][icon].
If all combatants are aware of the enemy, no surprise attacks are possible.			

When a companion overcomes the test, he has noticed that something is going on and is ready when all hell breaks loose. If he rolled a superior level of success he has been able to warn other companions.

A character who obtained a great success on his roll can warn another character who failed his own roll, or two characters on an extraordinary success. A warned hero is considered to have succeeded in his own roll.

If at least half the heroes in a company are not surprised (counting those who have been warned), then the fight is resolved as if the company was defending as far as the roll to assign combat advantages is concerned and holding the initiative. If on the contrary more than half companions have failed their rolls and are surprised, the company will be considered as if attacking to assign combat advantages and the opponents will fight holding the initiative.

Being Ambushed:

The companions are...	TN
Alert, with all heroes on the look-out, or advancing in an area unfit for ambushing.	12
Moderately alert, with at least one hero on the look-out, as when advancing in enemy territory, but not expecting an immediate threat.	**14**
Marching with no look-outs or scouts opening their way, or encamped without set watches.	16
Completely unaware of the coming attack and involved in a task requiring concentration (opening a door, setting a trap and so on).	18

Ambushing Enemies

When it is the turn of the company to waylay its enemies, the Loremaster may treat it as a task and let his players choose their course of action. The skills listed below are probably the ones that best suit an ambush.

- The **Battle** skill should be used when the situation involves larger groups, if the chosen place doesn't offer obvious opportunities for triggering an ambush and only if there is sufficient time for careful planning.
- The **Hunting** skill is most useful in the wild, in areas offering ample opportunities for hiding, and when the encounter wasn't expected and didn't let the ambushers prepare beforehand.
- **Stealth** is usually used when the ambushers need to move to get close to their opponents, and in situations when remaining silent is most important, as for example could be the case when the action is taking place inside a building, or underground.

The Target Number for the task can be set as usual at 14, or the Loremaster can select a difficulty from the Ambushing Table below.

Ambushing Enemies:

The Enemy is...	TN
Completely unaware of the coming attack, is sleeping, or similar.	No roll required
Marching with no scouts opening their way, or encamped without set watches.	12
Moderately alert, as when advancing in enemy territory, but not expecting an immediate threat.	**14**
Alert, with set watches, or advancing in an area unfit for ambushing.	16
Extremely alert, and includes creatures with heightened senses, like the ability to scent enemies or to see in the dark.	18

All players participating in an ambush must succeed in their roll for the surprise attack to succeed and catch their opponents unprepared. A character who obtained a great success on his roll can assist another character who failed his own roll, or two characters on an extraordinary success. An assisted hero is considered to have succeeded in his own roll.

If the ambush attempt is successful, the attacking companions will fight automatically holding the initiative. Additionally, the surprised enemies won't be able to make opening volleys using ranged weapons. If one or more companions fail their rolls, the enemies notice in time the presence of the company and the fight is resolved normally, with the defending enemies holding the initiative.

2. Determine Initiative

Usually determined by the events leading up to the combat or by the characters' actions, the nature of a combat encounter dictates whether the companions will resolve their attacks before or after their opponents. This will have repercussions on how opening volleys will be handled, and influences how hard it will be for them to exploit their position in an advantageous way (see the Resolving Opening Volleys and Assign Combat Advantages paragraphs opposite).

The Company is Defending

This is probably the most common combat situation faced by adventurers. Both the company and its opposition are aware of the coming battle, and are armed and ready.

Defending companions will hold the initiative and may easily manoeuvre to profit from an advantageous terrain feature, like a hill or a ruin if outside, or a narrow passageway or room.

The Company is Attacking

A rarer occurrence, this could involve player-heroes trying to free captured prisoners, or trying to get hold of a prized possession. As in the previous instance, both the company and its enemies are armed and ready.

The company's enemy is holding the initiative, and the heroes will find it more difficult to make use of advantageous terrain features.

Uncertain Situation

When the setup of a combat encounter doesn't let the Loremaster determine clearly who is the attacker and who's defending, an opposed roll between the highest **Battle** ratings in the opposing sides may be required to sort things out (the Loremaster should note that the **Battle** rating of a creature is represented by its Vocation score — see the Adversaries section on page 230).

The side that wins the opposed roll is considered to be fighting as if defending (and thus holding the initiative and profiting from advantageous terrain features).

Situation	Initiative
The company is defending against an advancing enemy.	The company
The company is attacking an enemy in a defensive position.	The enemy
The companions were ambushed but at least half of them passed the Surprise test.	The company
The companions were ambushed and more than half of them failed the Surprise test.	The enemy
The company ambushed the enemy and all companions passed the Surprise test.	The company
The company ambushed the enemy but at least one hero failed the Surprise test.	The enemy
Sort any unclear situation with an opposed roll: highest companions' Battle vs highest ranking enemy (Vocation).	Winner

Effects of Initiative:

Initiative	Order of Action	Roll for Combat Advantages
The company	Companions act first	TN 14
The enemy	Enemies act first	TN 18

3. Assign Combat Advantages

Before combat at close quarters is joined, all players may make a roll of Battle to determine if their characters spot

features of the battleground that may be exploited to gain an edge over their foes and thus grant them bonus Success dice (see Preliminary Rolls at page 151).

4. Resolving Opening Volleys

The descriptions of the different combat types given above show situations where the sides involved in the confrontation are separated by a short distance, allowing for the brief exchange of volleys using ranged weapons.

The precise circumstances of the combat encounter should let the Loremaster judge how many volleys to allow (if any at all). Normally, all combatants are entitled to a single volley using a bow or a thrown weapon (a spear). If the two sides are separated by a greater distance, then the Loremaster might allow characters using a bow to let loose more than one volley with their weapon.

- The difficulty of all volleys is equal to TN 12, plus the Parry rating of the target, modified by a shield if one is carried by the target.

If a target is aware of an incoming ranged attack (a warrior advancing to join a confrontation definitely would be) a shield doubles its modifier, as the carrier deftly protects himself.

Unless there are reasons not to do so, the exchange is considered to take place simultaneously, and so its effects are applied to player-heroes and their opponents at the same time.

Open Volleys:

Weapon	Default Volleys	TN
Thrown weapon (Spear)	1	TN 12, plus Parry, plus shield. If target is aware of attack, double the shield modifier.
Bows	2 if distance is greater	

Surprised companions and enemies are not allowed opening volleys. All volleys are resolved simultaneously.

Close Quarters

When the onset has been resolved, the fight at close quarters begins. Before a combat round sequence is initiated, players choose a stance and engage the enemy.

Combat Rounds

A combat round represents the time it takes a hero to accomplish a significant action, like attacking with a weapon, breaking down a door, freeing a tied captive,

and so on. Trivial actions, like opening a door, passing an object to another character, or dropping an item, don't take up any significant time, and can be carried out at the same time as more important tasks. A number of combat-specific tasks that players may attempt during a fight are listed at the end of this chapter.

During each combat round, all combatants belonging to the side holding the initiative take their turn, followed by the other side.

Stance: at the start of each round, all players declare their characters' stances (Forward, Open, Defensive, or Rearward). Characters can only take a Rearward stance if two other characters take Forward, Open or Defensive stances.

Action Resolution: characters take their actions in order of stance, from forward to rearward.

Stances

A character's stance describes the attitude of a hero during a round of combat, from boldest to most cautious, and determines both his basic combat Target Numbers and the order in which each character acts.

During the first round of combat, all players select a stance for their heroes, choosing one of the four available options from the table below. Characters may change their stance at the beginning of each round. There are no restrictions on a hero's stance unless a hero wishes to assume a Rearward stance (see opposite). A hero who spent his previous round in a rearward stance may flee combat at the beginning of a round.

Players choose their stance before a combat round sequence starts – they change stance simply by choosing a different one before the following combat sequence.

Order of Action

When it is the company's turn to act, the characters' actions are resolved starting with those fighting in a Forward stance, and progressing through the stances until those in a Rearward stance have acted.

If two or more characters are fighting in the same stance, the character with the highest basic Wits score acts first, then the second highest, and so on.

Close Combat Stances

The first three stances (*Forward*, *Open* and *Defensive*) see a character exchange blows in the thick of the fight, using close combat weapons.

As long as his hero maintains a close combat stance, a player uses the stance's combat TN when making an

Combat Stances:

Stance	Combat TN	Order of Action	Notes	Description
Forward	6	1	Close combat	Exploiting any opportunity to attack, to the point of exposing yourself to the retaliation of your enemies.
Open	9	2	Close combat	Fighting without sparing yourself, but giving proper attention to your enemies' actions.
Defensive	12	3	Close combat	Fighting conservatively, trying to protect yourself or others and holding your ground.
Rearward*	12	4	Ranged combat	Staying away from the press, to attack your foes from a distance.

*A character is allowed to assume a Rearward stance only if there are a least two other characters fighting in a close combat stance (see Ranged Combat Stance: Rearward, opposite).

attack roll using a close combat weapon; the same TN is used by the Loremaster for all close combat attack rolls directed against the character during a round.

For example, a hero fighting in a Forward stance has a combat TN of 6. He will use this number when rolling to hit an enemy. The Loremaster, in turn, will use this same TN when the enemies attack the player-hero in close combat. The Forward stance makes a hero's attacks easier, but makes him much easier to hit.

Ranged Combat Stance: Rearward

Once a confrontation is underway, player-heroes are allowed to make ranged attacks only if they choose a Rearward stance.

A character is allowed to assume this stance only if at least two other characters protect him by fighting in a close combat stance, AND if the total number of enemies facing the company isn't more than twice the number of characters in the company.

Trotter, Caranthir, Lifstan and the Bride are facing a group of three Orc soldiers from the Mountains and two Wild Wolves, led by a Messenger of Lugbúrz – for a total of six enemies. The enemy does not outnumber the company by more than 2:1, and so the heroes are free to choose their stances normally. Lifstan chooses an Open stance, the Bride chooses to fight Forward, while Caranthir takes a Defensive stance; as there are three other companions in close combat, Trotter is free to stand back to shoot his bow in a Rearward stance.

A particular situation, like fighting on a narrow ledge, a mountain path or another condition enabling fighters to make ranged attacks at greater ease might lead the Loremaster to allow more characters to assume a Rearward position.

For example, if the company severely outnumbers the opposition – at least three companions are engaging every enemy involved in the fight, the Loremaster may allow his players to assume a Rearward stance without the need of having two characters in close combat for every hero in Rearward.

If the full company of six adventurers was facing a Mountain Troll, three heroes might attack the creature at close combat, while three other companions stand back and aim at the monster with their ranged weapons.

If a character finds himself unable to satisfy these requirements at the beginning of a round, he must choose a different stance.

Characters in a Rearward stance may not attack using close combat weapons, and may be targeted only by attackers using ranged weapons.

The basic Target Number for all ranged attacks is 12.

Engagement

When every player has determined the stance his hero will fight in, all combatants must engage one or more opponents.

More Enemies than Heroes	More Heroes than Enemies (or sides equally matched)
The Loremaster pairs each unengaged creature with an unengaged companion in close combat. Remaining creatures can either engage a hero who is already engaged, or stand back, possibly to attack using a ranged weapon.	The players pair each unengaged hero with an unengaged adversary. Any remaining companion can then be assigned to face a creature that is already engaged.

A character is engaged when paired in close combat with at least one opponent. A combatant remains engaged until he defeats all opposition. A hero may be simultaneously engaged by up to 3 human-sized opponents, or 2 large creatures (such as Trolls). Enemies may be engaged by up to 3 companions, or 5 in the case of large creatures.

More Enemies than Heroes

When the opposition outnumbers the company, the Loremaster first assigns an opponent of his choice to every companion in a close combat stance (heroes in Rearward cannot be engaged).

When all such heroes have been paired with one opponent, there will be a number of enemies left.

The Loremaster must determine what the enemies in excess do, choosing among a) engage a hero who is already engaged, or b) stand back, possibly to attack using a ranged weapon.

Usually, up to 3 human-sized creatures or 2 large creatures (such as Trolls) can engage a given hero during the same combat round. Heroes engaged by multiple foes may choose freely which adversary to attack.

Enemies that chose to stand back and use a ranged weapon may attack any hero involved in the fight.

The companions are outnumbered, and thus the Loremaster is in charge of assigning adversaries to each companion in a Forward, Open or Defensive stance. As Trotter is safely preparing to shoot his bow in Rearward, Lifstan and the Bride are paired with a Wild Wolf each and Caranthir is engaged by an Orc soldier; this leaves the Loremaster with two Orc soldiers and the Messenger of Lugbúrz: the Loremaster determines that the two unengaged Orc soldiers stand back and aim at the fighting companions with their bows, while the Messenger of Lugbúrz lifts his heavy scimitar and joins the Wild Wolf as he gnaws at the Bride in her Forward stance.

More Heroes Than Enemies (or sides equally matched)

When the companions outnumber their foes or match them in number, each player chooses an adversary for his hero in a close combat stance among those introduced by the Loremaster as eligible targets.

When all heroes in a Forward, Open or Defensive stance have been paired with one opponent, there might still be companions in close combat left without an adversary.

When this happens, the players may assign them to attack a creature already engaged by another companion.

Usually, up to a maximum of 3 companions may engage a human-sized opponent at the same time, while up to 5 companions can engage an enemy greater than human-sized (such as a Troll). When a creature is engaged by multiple companions, the Loremaster may choose freely which companion to attack when the turn of the creature comes.

After a bitter fight that left two Wild Wolves and two Orc soldiers on the ground, Trotter is still shooting his bow and the Bride and Caranthir are still engaged, respectively fighting the Messenger of Lugbúrz in a Forward stance and the remaining Orc soldier in an Open stance. Lifstan

is Weary, as killing the Wild Wolf has worn him down considerably: he chooses a Defensive stance and joins the Bride as she duels with the evil minion of Mordor.

It is possible that the choice of stances made by the players or some special fighting ability (such as a Virtue) might determine that there will be enemies left when all companions in close combat have engaged an adversary.

If this happens, the Loremaster chooses whether the 'spare' enemies engage a hero who is already engaged or stand back, possibly to attack with a ranged weapon.

Player Turns

When it is the company's turn to act, the players take their actions in the order determined by their stances. Each player chooses an action for their character to perform. The action could be an attack, as described below, a task like those described on page 178, or a different action determined by the current turn of events, like rescuing a fallen comrade, sending out a warning, and so on.

Attacks

An attack is an action roll made using a Weapon skill or Cultural Weapon skill. Heroes may attack their enemies in close combat, or at a distance using a ranged weapon.

Attack Rolls:

Attack Type	Attribute Bonus	TN
Close Combat	Body	Hero Stance TN + target Parry
Ranged Combat		TN 12 + target Parry

Close Combat Attacks

Combatants exchange blows using close combat weapons as soon as the sides involved in the fight make contact.

The Target Number of an attack made using a close combat weapon is based on the attacking hero's combat stance (see above) and modified by the Parry rating of the target (and by his shield, if he carries one).

Trotter is fighting in an Open stance (TN 9); his Parry rating is 5, and he carries a buckler (+1). A Spider attempts to bite him in close combat! The Loremaster rolls against Trotter's TN of 15 (basic TN 9, +5, +1 for the buckler).

Brawling Attacks

A character attempting a close combat attack without a proper weapon (either unarmed or wielding an improvised weapon) can make a brawling attack:

Brawling attacks are made using the Dagger weapon skill, causing 1 Endurance point's worth of damage on a successful roll, and additional harm equal to the attacker's Damage rating on a great or extraordinary success. A brawling attack cannot result in a Piercing blow.

Ranged Attacks

Usually, heroes may attack with their ranged weapons before close combat is joined, if the Loremaster deems that a preliminary exchange of volleys is allowed by the situation, generally if the groups enter the fray from a distance (see Opening Volleys on page 171).

As soon as combat at close quarters starts, a character may use a ranged weapon only in the Rearward stance (see Ranged Combat Stance: Rearward, above).

The TN to attack a target involved in a fight using a ranged weapon is equal to 12, plus the Parry rating of the target, and modified by a shield if the target is using one.

The high basic TN reflects the difficulty of aiming at a moving target, while being careful not to hit another companion engaged in the fight.

The Bride is fighting in a Rearward position. She is trying to skewer a Black Uruk engaging Trotter in close quarters by throwing her spear (ranged attack: TN 12); the Black Uruk's Parry rating is 5, and he carries a shield (+2). The Bride will need to roll 19 or more to hit (basic TN 12, +5, +2 for the shield).

Throwing Attacks

A character attempting a ranged attack using a stone or another object not specifically designed for throwing makes a throwing attack:

Throwing attacks are rolled using the Dagger weapon skill, and inflict 1 Endurance point's damage on a successful roll, and additional loss of Endurance equal to the attacker's ranged Damage rating on a great or extraordinary success. A throwing attack cannot result in a Piercing blow.

Attribute Bonus for Attack Tests (Body)

The effectiveness of a weapon relies on the skill of its user, but may also profit from his physical prowess and strength.

When a player is using a Weapon skill to resolve a test, he may spend a point of Hope to invoke a Body Attribute bonus.

Endurance Loss

A well-placed blow always has unpleasant consequences for its target, whether or not the hit is successful in producing long term damage: a combatant can be disoriented by the sudden pain, lose his wind, or be sent reeling by the powerful impact.

When a melee or ranged attack roll succeeds, then the attack was successful in hurting the target in some way: the target suffers an immediate loss of Endurance, based on the quality of the roll and possibly modified by the attacker's Damage bonus.

- On a success, the target loses Endurance points equal to the damage rating of the weapon used.
- On a great success, the target loses Endurance points equal to the damage rating of the weapon PLUS the Damage rating of the attacking hero.
- On an extraordinary success, the target loses a number of Endurance points equal to the Damage rating of the weapon PLUS double the Damage rating of the attacking hero.

Óri son of Póri, fighting in a defensive stance, swings his mighty great axe at a slavering Orc's head, with a TN of 19 (TN 12 for his stance, +5 for the Orc's Parry rating, +2 for the Orc's shield). He rolls a 5 on his Feat die and a 6, a 6

and a 3 on his three Success dice (for his Great Axe skill of ◆◆◆) for a total of 20, which hits; and as two dice came up with the ꞇ icon, the attack is an extraordinary success! The great axe's base damage is 9, and Óri adds his Damage rating of 7 (Óri has a high Body) twice, for a total of 23 Endurance points (9+7+7). The Orc is likely to be downed in a single swing...

Attack Roll	Endurance loss
Success	Weapon Damage rating
ꞇ	Add attacker's Damage rating
ꞇꞇ+	Add attacker's Damage rating x2

Heroes may halve a loss of Endurance by choosing to be knocked back (next round, remain in the same stance and lose your action). Creatures cannot choose to be knocked back.

Knockback

Fighters soon discover that sometimes it is better to literally 'roll with the punches,' and reduce the force of an attack by stepping back or to the side or by kneeling under the force of a blow – in gaming terms, they learn to let themselves be 'knocked back' by their opponent

- Characters may halve the Endurance loss caused by a successful attack (rounding fractions up) by letting themselves be thrown off-balance.

A character who is knocked back cannot change his stance and will spend his following round recovering his fighting position, unable to take any further action that turn. If an adversary attacks while a hero is recovering from knockback, the attack is resolved normally.

Removing a Helm

Warriors fighting in a full helm enjoy better protection, but suffer from its rather hefty Encumbrance rating. Unlike the rest of the equipment making up a hero's gear of war, some relief can be found if a fighter takes the time to drop the helm and take a breath of fresh air.

- A character involved in combat wearing a helm can remove it when his turn to act comes, as a free action. Removing a helm causes the hero to lower his Fatigue score by 3 points (and, of course, to lose the helm's Protection bonus).

Players should note that a character that is already Weary doesn't gain anything from lowering his Fatigue score (as Weariness is normally removed only after a prolonged rest – see page 132 for details).

Piercing Blows

During combat, a fighter can see his stamina be slowly whittled away, as fatigue and blows suffered take their toll, or he can be suddenly and unexpectedly cut down by a vicious stroke that bloodily penetrates his protective equipment.

In addition to causing the loss of Endurance points, any successful attack may inflict a Piercing blow:

- If the Feat die result in the initial attack roll is equal to or higher than the Edge rating of the weapon, the attack resulted in a Piercing blow.

Characters hit by a Piercing blow must immediately make a Protection test to avoid being Wounded.

Protection Test

A Protection test determines whether a character's armour prevented the blow from causing lasting damage.

- The character rolls the Feat die plus a number of Success dice equal to the Protection value of his suit of armour (modified by a helmet, if worn). The Target Number for the roll is equal to the Injury rating of the weapon used by the attacker.

If the roll fails, then the character has been Wounded. The player must check the **Wounded** box on the character sheet as a reminder.

Players may spend a point of Hope to invoke an Attribute bonus (**Body**) on a Protection test.

Called Shots

A fighting character who is feeling very confident – or desperate – may announce that he is trying a 'called shot' before rolling his attack dice. When a called shot hits home, a special attack result occurs, depending on the weapon used to attack (see the table below).

The roll for a called shot is resolved normally, with the following differences:

- A called shot hits only when the roll matches or beats the Target Number set for the attack AND the player obtains at least one ᴛ icon on his rolled Success dice.

If the roll result doesn't produce any ᴛ icons, the attack misses altogether (even if the total result matches or beats the attack TN).

If the roll result doesn't match or beat the attack Target Number AND the player gets a 👁 icon on his Feat die, the called shot attempt fails in a catastrophic way, called a *fumble*.

- A fumbling attacker loses his footing, exposing himself: the next time the fumbling character is attacked, the difficulty to hit him will be equal to his basic combat TN of his stance (he loses any bonuses from his attributes, Virtues or equipment).

The following table details the effects triggered by a successful called shot: these effects are applied *in addition* to the normal consequences of a successful attack (loss of Endurance, Piercing blow, etc.). Players should note that the effects aren't always applicable: for example, attempting a called shot while wielding an axe isn't particularly useful when fighting against an opponent who is not carrying a shield.

Called Shots:

Weapon type	Successful called shot
Axes	The target's shield has been smashed.
Bows	The attack resulted in a Piercing blow, regardless of the outcome of the Feat die.
Mattock	The target's shield has been smashed.
Swords	The target drops his weapon.
Spears	The attack resulted in a Piercing blow, regardless of the outcome of the Feat die.

Tasks in Combat

Described below are a number of special tasks commonly employed by adventurers involved in combat. In general, these tasks require a hero to be fighting in a specific stance, and as usual require a skill roll. Difficulties are set at TN 14, unless otherwise specified.

Tasks in Combat:

Stance	Action	Declared...	Skill roll	May attack as well?
Forward	Intimidate Foe	When it is hero's turn to take action	Awe or Battle	No
Open	Rally Comrades	When it is hero's turn to take action	Inspire or Song	No
Defensive	Protect Companion	When stance is chosen; point of Hope spent when protected character is attacked.	-	Yes
Rearward	Prepare Shot	When it is hero's turn to take action	-	No
Any	Escape Combat	Either at beginning of round; or when it is their turn to take action.	Athletics	No

Forward stance: Intimidate Foe

"Depart, or not one of you will be spared. Not one will be left alive to take back tidings to the North. You do not know your peril."

A hero may attempt to intimidate his foes with a display of his prowess or ferocity in battle. When it is his turn to take action, a hero may forego his chance to make an attack roll and make an **Awe** or **Battle** roll instead. The TN for the roll is 10, plus the highest Attribute level among all foes. A hero who just received a Wound or received it during the previous round cannot attempt to intimidate his foes.

On a successful roll, the enemy's morale has been shaken, and the opponents lose a total number of Hate points (see box) based on the quality of the success produced by the roll:

- **Ordinary success:** 2 Hate points
- **Great success:** 3 Hate points
- **Extraordinary success:** 4 Hate points, or a number of points equal to the intimidating character's Valour rating, whichever is higher.

The Loremaster divides the Hate point loss among the company's adversaries in any way he sees fit.

Hate Points

Hate points represent the intensity of a creature's determination and resourcefulness. The Loremaster uses a creature's Hate point rating to gauge its resolve and to fuel its special abilities.

Open stance: Rally Comrades

"To me! To me! Elves and Men! To me! O my kinsfolk!" he cried, and his voice shook like a horn in the valley.

A brave leader, standing amongst his friends, is always heedful of his surroundings, and may attempt to rally his companions when their hearts begin to fail them.

When it is his turn to take action, a hero may forego his chance to make an attack roll and make an **Inspire** or **Song** roll instead.

If the roll is successful, all fighting companions who suffered a loss of Endurance during the current combat (including the rallying hero) recover a number of Endurance points based on the quality of the success:

- **Ordinary success:** 2 Endurance points
- **Great success:** 3 Endurance points

- **Extraordinary success:** 4 Endurance points, or a number of points equal to the rallying character's Heart rating, whichever is higher.

Defensive stance: Protect Companion

Fíli and Kíli had fallen defending him with shield and body, for he was their mother's elder brother.

A character fighting in a Defensive stance may strive to protect another hero fighting in an Open or Forward stance. He must announce the name of the character he wants to protect right after choosing his stance for the coming turn.

When the protected character is attacked, the protecting hero may choose to spend 1 point of Hope and become the target of the attack in his place. The attack is resolved using the stance of the defending character to calculate its TN. Note that a hero who chooses this task may still attack when his turn comes.

Rearward stance: Prepare Shot

As soon as they had landed, he had bent his bow and fitted an arrow... Now he sent a swift and sure shot into the leaping beast.

A hero fighting in a Rearward stance may spend an entire round preparing a ranged attack, and get a clearer shot the following round.

If the player succeeds in a ranged attack during the following round, he is considered to have successfully achieved a Called shot.

Any close combat stance: Escape Combat

"Fly! This is a foe beyond any of you."

A hero who spent his previous round in a Rearward stance may flee the combat zone at the beginning of a round. No roll is required to do so.

A companion fighting in a close combat stance may attempt to escape when his turn to act comes. At the end of his round, a player-hero may attempt a roll of **Athletics**. The TN for the roll is equal to 10 plus the highest Attribute level among the opponents that the character is facing.

On a successful roll, the companion has successfully escaped. A great or extraordinary success is needed if the hero was engaged by multiple opponents. If the escape attempt fails, the acting hero remains engaged and cannot attack when his next turn to act comes.

Non-combat Actions

A number of non-combat action options have been presented already, but players will always surprise their Loremaster by proposing unusual or unexpected tasks.

This is a good sign that the players are enjoying the game, and should be encouraged wherever possible. The factors to consider when resolving these actions are time, difficulty and consequences:

- **Time** – can the character perform the task in one round, or will it take more? This is up to the judgement of the Loremaster, but for these cases consider a round to be a maximum of 30 seconds long.
- **Difficulty** – if the action requires a roll to resolve, the difficulty of the task is assigned as usual, with a default TN of 14 unless the Loremaster decides otherwise.
- **Consequences** – as with any task, success or failure should have consequences.

For example, a player who describes his character as leaping from a boulder to reach an Orc-chieftain issuing orders from the rear of battle could be allowed an Athletics roll (TN 14). As a consequence of success, the character should be able to engage the commander in the following round unless one of the foul creature's companions can intervene (or might even attack immediately if he scored a great or extraordinary success).

If the character fails, he should lose his next action as he picks himself up from the ground and is immediately engaged by opponents as if fighting in a forward stance.

Loremaster Turns

The Loremaster chooses the actions attempted by the company's opponents, considering that normally creatures can only make close combat attacks against characters in forward, open or defensive stances, and can use a missile weapon only if they stood back and remained unengaged.

The description of a creature, and especially its special abilities, should guide the Loremaster in making his tactical choices (see **Part Seven: The Shadow**) but most information comes from the context of the adventure being played: what is the enemy trying to do, apart from harming the heroes? Are they defending a place? Or are they looking for something? Having the sketch of a plan in mind can provide the Loremaster with a lot of helpful twists that can make combat exciting and fun.

Complications

The difficulty of an attack can be affected by a range of factors such as shooting an arrow or throwing a spear at long range, fighting during a rainstorm, or while knee-deep in icy water, in mud, or in other difficult terrain. The values listed in the table below should be subtracted from or added to the TN of an attack. The column to the far right details a number of modifiers that may be applied to a ranged attack; the same attack can be affected by more than one modifier.

Complications:

Attacker is...	Modifier to TN	Examples	Ranged Attack Circumstances
Moderately hindered	+2	Standing on difficult terrain, suffering from unfavorable weather conditions, or in cramped quarters.	Target is at medium range, or is under good cover (trees in a sparse wood).
Severely hindered	+4	Almost blinded by heavy snow, knee-deep in mud or swift-running water, or in darkness.	Target is at long range, is very small (a bird), or protected by darkness or ample cover (trees in a dense wood).
Defender is...	**Modifier to TN**	**Examples**	**Ranged Attack Circumstances**
Moderately hindered	-2	Against a wall, in a corner, obliged to fight in cramped quarters.	Target is greater than human-sized (a Troll).
Severely hindered	-4	Blinded by the sun, attacked while trying to flee, immobilised by deep snow or mud.	Target is huge (a giant, a Dragon).

Extended Example of Combat

Onset

Trotter, Lifstan, Beran and the Bride are ambushed by a group of six Attercops, as the company advances on a path deep inside Mirkwood. The Loremaster narrates as several large spiders suddenly descend from the treetops or emerge from the darkness surrounding the path...

Check for Surprise

The Loremaster asks all players to make a test to check for surprise, and allows them to choose between either **Awareness** (the default choice) or **Hunting** (as the approaching enemies are wild creatures).

The Bride chooses to roll Awareness, as her faithful hound supports all her Awareness rolls: she is successful. Lifstan rolls his **Awareness** too, but fails. Lifstan is surprised. Beran chooses to roll Hunting: he obtains a great success, a result that allows him to warn another character who

failed his roll; Beran's player chooses to wait and see Trotter's roll too before he makes his choice.

Finally, Trotter rolls Awareness and fails too! Since he is the better archer, Beran's player determines that the Beorning warns him to allow him to roll for opening volleys. As a consequence, the young Barding is the only character in the company who is surprised by the ambush: the company will fight holding the initiative.

Opening Volleys

Considering that the company is being attacked from different directions and that they are in a dense forest, the Loremaster determines that the group will be allowed only one ranged attack volley, and that each attack will be directed at a different opponent. The six Attercops are not capable of ranged attacks, so they are not going to respond.

The Bride throws her spear at an approaching Attercop. Her TN is 16 and her roll is a 14, a failure by a mere 2 points! The Bride's player chooses to spend a point of Hope, to add her Body score to the roll as an Attribute bonus, and turn the failure into a success: she hits, even scoring a Piercing blow! The Loremaster rolls for the spider's Protection and fails: the Attercop is skewered by the Bride's trusted spear.

Beran casts his spear and spends a point of Hope too, and the spear finds its target for an Endurance loss of 5 points. Trotter bends his bow and lets loose an arrow and hits! Another Attercop loses 5 points of Endurance. Lifstan was surprised, and thus could not throw his spear at the approaching enemies.

Combat Advantages

Before close combat is joined, the Loremaster requires all players to make a **Battle** roll to determine eventual Combat advantages: all players roll against TN 14, again with the exception of Lifstan who was surprised. With a stroke of luck, Beran succeeds with his measly **Battle** 1, and his player records 1 extra Success die! All the other heroes fail at their roll.

Choose Stances

The spiders are upon the company. All players choose a stance for their characters as the heroes grab their weapon of choice: Beran and the Bride choose to fight Forward, Lifstan assumes an Open stance, and Trotter chooses to fight in Rearward (his companions allow him to do so by fighting in close combat).

Engagement

Since there are more enemies than heroes, the Loremaster proceeds to engage the company as he sees fit: Beran, the Bride and Lifstan are first paired with one Attercop each (the three spiders that weren't hit before). Of the two remaining damaged spiders, one Attercop is sent against Beran who is the most exposed with his Parry rating of 4, and the other is left unengaged (the Loremaster intends to send it to attack Trotter using the creature's Great Leap ability...).

Combat Rounds

Since the company is holding the initiative, the players will get to resolve their attacks before their opponents get a chance to respond. Each combat round is resolved following the order of action set by the stances chosen by the players.

First Round - Players Turn

The first hero to attack is the Bride: her TN for the roll is 10 (6 for the Forward stance, plus the spider's Parry rating of 4). She swings her long-hafted axe with one hand and scores a hit, reducing the Attercop to 7 Endurance. Then it is the turn of Beran to attack with his great axe (again against a TN of 10): he swings his two-handed weapon at the damaged Attercop, hoping to cut it down before it attacks him on its round; his roll produces a normal success, inflicting 9 points of damage to the spider, enough to squash it!

Now it's Lifstan's turn, his chance to prove his worth; his TN is equal to 13 (9 for the Open stance plus Parry 4): he raises his sword and lets it fall on the Attercop, for a great success! He inflicts damage for 10 Endurance points (5 for the sword and 5 for his Damage bonus) as he plunges his sword deep into the spidery monster.

Finally, Trotter acts. He is unengaged and free to attack at leisure. He chooses to try and finish off the Attercop that Lifstan hit with a serious blow, hoping to get rid of it once and for all: Trotter's TN to hit is equal to 16 (12 for the rearward stance, plus Parry 4) but the roll produces a result of 8! A sure failure, as not even an Attribute bonus might turn it into a success!

First Round - Loremaster Turn

The Loremaster now proceeds to resolve the attacks of the four surviving Attercops. He starts with the one engaging the Bride: the Woodman slayer is *Woodcrafty*, and that makes her even more difficult to hit as the fight is being fought in a forest: her Parry is raised to 10 as she moves deftly using every branch and root to her advantage, bringing the TN to hit her to 16.

The Attercop's primary attack is *Ensnare*, a favoured ability: it adds its Attribute level of 3 to its roll against its TN 16, scoring an extraordinary success! Unfortunately for the Bride, not only is she caught in the sticky web of the Attercop using its Seize Victim power, but the spider tries immediately to sting her! The Loremaster rolls for the sting attack, again a favoured ability: the roll is a hit. The Bride loses 3 points of Endurance (luckily, the attack wasn't a called shot; otherwise the Bride would have been Poisoned!).

Now the Loremaster turns to Beran of the Mountains. The Beorning has finished one of his opponents with one blow, but the other tries to ensnare him. The TN to hit Beran is an easy 10 (6 for the Forward stance plus Parry 4) – the spider hits, winding its thread around the warrior, closing in to sting him in the following round.

Now resolving the engagements for the heroes in an open stance, the Loremaster rolls the dice for the heavily damaged Attercop facing Lifstan. Its TN to hit is equal to 14 (9 for the open stance plus Lifstan's Parry of 5) – the roll is a miss!

As his final action for the round, the Loremaster chooses what the unengaged Attercop will do. He decides to spend a point of Hate, to send the spider against Trotter with a Great Leap! The TN to hit Trotter is 17 (12 for the Rearward stance, plus the Hobbit's Parry rating of 5 – the buckler is not considered, as Trotter is using his bow, a 2-handed weapon), but the Attercop rolls at +3 as Ensnare is a favoured ability. The roll is a hit, and Trotter is caught in the creature's sticky thread.

The first round of combat is over. The company face a difficult challenge in the following rounds, as the Bride, Beran and Trotter won't be able to change stance and their Parry is reduced to half its usual rating, as the spiders they face have successfully seized them.

Other Sources of Injury

There are several ways for a hero to get hurt outside of combat. Adventurers can fall from a mountain path, be trapped in a hall set on fire by enemies or be caught in the frigid waters of a raging river.

Falling

When a hero falls he loses 2 Endurance points for every 3 feet of height fallen; if he passes an **Athletics** test (TN 14), the damage is halved. If the character falls for at least 6 feet, he must also pass a Protection test to avoid being Wounded, rolling against a TN equal to 10 plus 1 for every 3 feet of height (armour applies its benefits).

When a hero falls from a fir tree 30 feet tall he will lose 20 Endurance points (or 10 points if he passes the ***Athletics*** *test) and must pass a Protection test against TN 20 to avoid a Wound.*

Deadly Fall

When a hero falls from a distance that is likely to be lethal, or when he falls upon a surface capable of causing extremely serious harm (falling on rocks, or a stone floor), and he is Wounded and reduced to 0 Endurance points as a consequence, the character dies instantly.

Fire

Being accidentally exposed to fire causes a hero to lose a number of Endurance points for every round of exposure to heat, based on the intensity of the fire source. A character exposed to an open flame must pass a Protection test every round or be Wounded (armour applies its benefits).

The amount of damage suffered every round and the TN for the Protection tests is determined using the Fire Damage table below.

Fire Damage:

Source	End loss per round	Protection test TN
Torch flame	3	12
Camp-fire	5	14
Brazier of charcoal	8	16
Funeral pyre	12	18
Dragon fire	20	20

Drowning

When a hero is immersed in water, or is otherwise unable to breathe for long periods (for example if he failed an **Athletics** test to swim across a swift river, or is trying to get across a room filled with noxious fumes) he loses 5 Endurance points for every round of suffocation.

- Encounters -

"Who are you and what do you want?" they shouted, leaping to their feet and gipping for weapons. "Thorin son of Thráin son of Thrór King under the Mountain!" said the Dwarf in a loud voice, and he looked it, in spite of his torn clothes and draggled hood.

Adventurers meet many travellers and wanderers along the road, and may visit foreign courts and realms if their adventuring brings them far enough from their homelands. Whenever they deal with strangers, they should exercise some caution, as theirs is a trade considered peculiar or even dangerous by the common folk, and their arrival is often met with fear and suspicion. Even when meeting enemies of the common Enemy, player-heroes should watch their tongues and be mindful of their manners, as even trusty friends can be quick to anger in days of doubt.

The success or failure of a company's quest can often depend on the people the adventurers meet along the way. There are many powerful individuals who at first appear to be simple denizens of the Wild, whose help or counsel could prove invaluable, and many cunning foes who are best avoided can at first appear friendly. Adventurers must soon learn that not all that glitters is gold, and all that is gold does not glitter...

When the company meets one or more Loremaster characters that do not qualify immediately as enemies, an encounter occurs. While much of an encounter is played out in the dialogue between the Loremaster and his players, the rules presented in this section are used to determine the progress of the meeting and its consequences.

Encounter Goal

In the course of a typical encounter, the adventurers will be trying to demonstrate their good intentions to a wary audience. Sometimes they could be trying to attain a more complex objective: are they trying to intimidate the people they met? Do they want to get help from them? Are they trying to learn something? The players taking part in an encounter should decide on their purpose in the meeting, and use the guidelines below to select suitable tasks.

Most encounters entail two stages, an introduction and an interaction. A complex encounter, like being guests in a foreign court, will feature both stages and allow for several tasks and tests. A simpler encounter, like meeting a company of wandering Dwarves in a tavern, might include only the introduction, and fewer die rolls.

Assign Encounter Advantages

Before the Introduction is started, all players may make a roll of **Insight** to gain bonus Success dice (see Preliminary Rolls on page 151).

Roleplaying Encounters

An important issue concerning gameplay will sooner or later be faced by any Loremaster and group of players: how much of an impact should the interaction between the players and the Loremaster have on the final outcome of an encounter? Should good roleplaying be allowed to affect the course of the game as much as the result of the actions attempted by players and resolved using dice? For example, can a player counteract the effects of a failed Inspire roll delivering a convincing speech? Or, reversing the point of view, should a bad die roll ruin an otherwise clever performance on the part of a player?

The answer is not an easy one, as it heavily relies on subjective things like personal taste and playing style, but as it often happens the truth is probably in the middle of things: a balanced gameplay, relying evenly on roleplaying and on the input provided by good and bad die rolls.

Introduction

> **"Thorin Oakenshield, at your service! Dori at your service!" said the two Dwarves bowing again.**

At the beginning of most encounters, the companions must present themselves, generally attempting to establish their identity in a way that is appropriate to their goals. At this stage, all players must choose whether their characters prefer to introduce themselves individually, or if they want to be represented as a group by a spokesman.

While at times it could be wise to let only one companion do the talking, as it lets the group take advantage of the best speaker among the company, electing a spokesman might prevent the remaining characters from eventually taking part in the following interaction phase (see below), especially at a formal meeting.

Useful Abilities

The skills that might be useful during an introduction vary, based on the nature of the encounter, the opposing party's attitude toward the company, and the companions' goals.

If the player-heroes can reasonably be assumed to have learnt something about the other group's customs and traditions prior to the encounter they may attempt a **Lore** roll to divine the most appropriate course of action.

Skills that are usually instrumental in establishing a good introduction are listed below, with some commentary regarding their uses and consequences.

Awe

Best used by a single spokesman, a roll of **Awe** conveys a powerful message without using a lot of words. A player-hero using **Awe** to impress someone usually does so to rectify a negative early reaction, or to quickly set the terms for the coming discussion. When a player has successfully used **Awe**, there won't be many questions regarding his or his company's identity, as deeds, lineage and other personal information are usually mentioned for the action to achieve the fullest effect.

Courtesy

If any companions choose to introduce themselves individually, they do so by making a roll of **Courtesy**. A polite introduction is the best way to smooth a relationship before asking for support or another form of assistance. It is most useful when already on friendly terms, as to unfriendly ears a courteous speaker might sound duplicitous. The action is made easier if the speaking companion does not intend to hide much information about himself from the listeners, but it is possible to politely refuse to reveal too much.

A failed **Courtesy** roll usually prevents a character from taking an active role in the encounter.

Riddle
When in doubt about the opposing party's intentions, the spokesman of a company may turn to his ability to craft questions and answers in a way to extract a lot of information in exchange for very little. A riddling spokesman must be wary, though, as a poor performance is sure to provoke mistrust in the opposing party, and compromise the outcome of the encounter.

Interaction

> **"P'raps ye sits here and chats with it a bitsy, my preciousss. It like riddles, praps it does, does it?"**

This is the main part of most social challenges, from a birthday party to a formal council. Usually, only characters who introduced themselves properly during the introduction may take an active role in the following interaction. On the other hand, characters who didn't introduce themselves may take a more passive role, for example proposing actions using **Insight** or **Riddle**.

The following skills can be used to various effect by players engaged in an interaction.

Insight
Player-Heroes can use **Insight** to gauge the emotions of those they interact with, possibly revealing unspoken purposes or hidden feelings. A successful **Insight** roll lets a character filter others' reactions, and thus works better when at least another companion is provoking useful responses with some kind of action.

Inspire
Requiring a crowd of listeners, or at least the complete attention of a single individual, a player may attempt a skill roll using **Inspire** to capitalise on an already positive introduction. The purpose of the skill roll could be raising the spirit of an endangered community, or that of a downcast leader. The objective of the inspiration attempt must be obvious or the effects of even a successful action will be weak.

Persuade
A player may take advantage of his persuasiveness to make up for a poor first impression or a bad introduction, or to strengthen his hold on already-captivated listeners. Unlike **Inspire**, **Persuade** may be used discreetly, during any kind of social interaction.

Riddle
The skill of **Riddle** can be used again by players acting in a social environment, either to formally play the ancient riddle-game, practised and respected even by the unlikeliest of wicked creatures, or to gather information and news. In the latter case, a successful **Riddle** roll may allow a player-hero to put together all sort of titbits that incautious speakers might accidentally give away in their conversation, or simply to gather interesting facts while appearing uninterested or unconcerned.

Encounter Structure:

Stage	Description	Useful Abilities (examples)
Assign Encounter Advantages	All players may roll **Insight** to gain Encounter advantages (see page 151)	-
Introduction	Companions present themselves: choose a spokesman or make individual introductions (roll **Lore** for hints about what's best).	**Awe** to impress strangers quickly, revealing lots about self; **Courtesy** to ask for support, especially from friends; **Riddle** to extract information without revealing too much.
Interaction	The main part of an encounter. Usually, only heroes who properly introduced themselves during Introduction may now propose actions.	**Insight** to observe and evaluate; **Inspire** to address crowds and uplift spirits; **Persuade** to make a point; **Riddle** to gather information; **Song** to garner approval.
At the beginning of an encounter the players should focus on an objective and choose their course of action accordingly.		

Song
A good song or tune is almost never out of place at a relaxed social encounter, but can also be a powerful diplomatic device if the singer finds the proper song or intones well-chosen words.

Tolerance

When the adventurers enter the Hall of Thráin to petition the King under the Mountain, or step into the courtyard of the house of Beorn, they usually have an objective in mind. Sometimes, this goal is in conflict with the intentions of the people they meet. When this happens, the Loremaster sets up a Tolerance rating for the encounter, indicating the maximum number of rolls that the companions may collectively fail before their behaviour puts an end to their chances of getting further assistance or cooperation.

When the company fails a number of rolls in excess of the Tolerance rating set for the encounter, the meeting is essentially over: from that moment on, the players may not propose or attempt any further tasks.

The Loremaster and his players may continue to play the scene, but from a gaming perspective everything has been said and done. The adventurers will be left to deal with the consequences of the encounter, whether their aims have been fulfilled or not.

Based on the circumstances, running out of Tolerance may signify different things: that the encounter is simply over, or that the words exchanged during the meeting have aggravated the situation so much that the heroes should be ready to make reparations.

Basic Rating

Since an adventurer often has only a bold stare and a weapon of worth to distinguish him from a rascal, the basic Tolerance rating of an encounter is based on Valour or Wisdom, and is equal to the rating of the companion with the highest value in the group. The Loremaster chooses which characteristic is most valued by the opposing party members, considering their customs and personalities.

As a rule of thumb, individuals who prize courage, renown or prowess will favour Valour (like warriors, soldiers or captains) while peace-loving folks, or people not especially familiar with warfare or heroic deeds will favour Wisdom (common folks, merchants, Elves, Hobbits and Wizards).

The company encounters a group of wandering Elves. They prize Wisdom above all, and thus the basic Tolerance rating for the encounter is equal to 2 (the highest Wisdom score in the group).

The Loremaster may then further tailor the Tolerance rating of the encounter around the current situation by taking into consideration one or more modifiers, selecting them among the ones detailed below.

Should a modified Tolerance rating decrease to 0 or less, it is considered to be 1 instead.

Standing Modifier

If at least one companion present at the meeting belongs to the same culture of the encountered party, his status among his folk positively affects the encounter: The highest Standing value among those of any companions belonging to the same cultural group of the encountered party is added to the basic Tolerance rating for the encounter.

In the preceding example, if a companion in the group is an Elf, then his Standing rating (or, if there is more than one Elf in the company, the highest Standing rating among them) can be added as a positive modifier to the basic Tolerance rating of the encounter.

Prejudice

Even the Battle of Five Armies has not completely eased the relationships between the people counted among the Free Folks of the North, as some preconceptions are too old or too deeply buried to be forgotten easily.

If an encountered group or individual can be considered to harbour a prejudice against a Culture represented in the group, the Tolerance rating of the encounter suffers a negative modifier equal to -1.

Different individuals may have several reasons to hold a culture or group in contempt, but characters belonging to the following Cultures commonly display the following prejudices:

- Beornings are prejudiced against Dwarves.
- Dwarves are prejudiced against Elves.
- Elves are prejudiced against Dwarves.

In the example above, the Tolerance of the encounter would be decreased if the company encountering the Elves counts among its members one or more Dwarves.

Additional Modifiers

If the Loremaster deems it necessary to improvise additional modifiers based on the current circumstances, he should go ahead and choose a value between +1 to +3 or -1 to -3. Here follow some examples:

- The adventurers' arrival in a place recalls some local legend or song (+3)
- The adventurers are already known and appreciated among the people they meet (+2)
- The company is carrying a message or is on an errand from someone respected by the people encountered (+1)
- The adventurers are coming from a area feared or shunned by the people they meet (-1)
- The company insists in carrying their weapons in a hallowed place (-2)
- The adventurers are asking for passage across forbidden territory (-3)

Evaluating the Outcome of an Encounter – Optional Rule

In addition to the rules for Tolerance, the Loremaster is advised to keep track of the number of successful rolls achieved by the player-heroes during an encounter's Introduction and Interaction stages. At the end of an encounter, the total number of successful rolls achieved by the company can be used to determine its consequences.

- Every successful roll counts for one, while a great success equates to two successful rolls and an extraordinary result to three successful rolls. Then compare the number of successful rolls the company on the following table:

Evaluating the Outcome of an Encounter:

Average successful rolls	Degree of Success	Description (to be based on situation)
1	Narrow Success	Something didn't go as well as hoped: the companions got what they were looking for but at the price of some unexpected complication.
2-4	Success	The companions achieved the goal they set for the encounter, but nothing else.
5-6	Great Success	The companions succeeded beyond their expectations, and some additional positive consequence is added to their reward.
7+	Extraordinary Success	The company succeeded admirably and the outcome of the encounter is surprisingly positive.

At the end of an encounter, count the number of successful rolls (a great success counts for 2 successes and an extraordinary result for 3).

Awarding Advancement Points during Encounters

In addition to giving players a chance to achieve an objective, most encounters provide their characters with ample opportunities to shine, through creative roleplaying and a clever application of their abilities.

From a gaming perspective, this is a very favourable occasion to earn Advancement points through the use of their Common skills (see page 194), as an encounter is certainly a 'safer environment' than other circumstances such as journeys or combat (although the Loremaster should make sure that all tasks proposed during an encounter have tangible consequences on the story, whether the adventurers fail or succeed).

- Part Five: The Fellowship Phase -

The - Fellowship - Phase

*"When winter first begins to bite
and stones crack in the frosty night,
when pools are black and trees are bare,
'tis evil in the Wild to fare."*

Heroes are not always busy navigating deep caverns, fighting back the Shadow, or fleeing from dangers beyond their ability to face. Even the most eager of adventurers need some time to rest and enjoy what life has to offer, spending days practising a craft, reading a good book, or even writing one.

Whether it is spent in the pursuit of a noble goal, or simply resting comfortably to recover energy before setting out on the road once again, the time characters pass when not adventuring is called the Fellowship phase.

How a Fellowship Phase Works

A Fellowship phase is a session of play driven by the players' choices. While during the Adventuring phase, players usually react to the Loremaster's storytelling, during a Fellowship phase they get to elaborate upon their characters' stories and ambitions. The Loremaster is the final judge regarding the interpretation of the rules, but is invited to sit back and follow what his players have to say about their characters.

A Fellowship phase marks the conclusion of the current Adventuring phase, and as such ideally takes place at the end of a gaming session.

The Passing of Years

The default pacing of gameplay for *The One Ring* sees a group of adventurers take part in one adventure per year of game time. If this pace is kept, then a Fellowship phase can also be used as a milestone to mark the end of one year of game time and the beginning of the following one. On average, a Fellowship phase marking the passing of a year should represent a pause from adventuring lasting for approximately an entire season.

Three months are enough for any companion to return home from any location in Wilderland and leave him some time to be among his family and folk. Moreover, spending the colder months of a year as a Fellowship phase is a natural choice, as it will leave the warmer seasons open for the following Adventuring phase: a life in the Wild is an unforgiving one, and adventurers prefer to have a roof over their heads when the wind is howling and the land is buried in snow...

Structure

A Fellowship phase lasts from a week to one full season of game time, depending on the Loremaster's structuring of the game. At the beginning of a Fellowship phase, the players must choose whether the company retires somewhere to spend the phase as a group or if they temporarily disband and each hero returns home by himself.

Once they are set upon a decision, they start taking individual turns to tell the Loremaster and the other players what they are going to do and where they are going to do it.

In addition, players get to record the growth of their characters by spending their Experience points and Advancement points.

Destination

The players are free to spend the phase at any place they have already visited during the game. The Adventurer's Map comes in useful here, especially if the players have updated the information on it and kept track of their journeys.

The route bringing the company or each individual player-hero to his chosen destination is considered to take place 'behind the scenes' without Fatigue tests and consequences, unless the Loremaster or his players have a mind to play out the details.

Fellowship Phase Structure:

Step	Table
Choose Destination	The company repairs to a Sanctuary, or disbands temporarily (companions return home).
Standing Upkeep	If away from home, companions must reduce their Standing by one point OR spend Treasure equal to their current Standing.
Spend Experience Points	Players buy Wisdom, Valour, or Weapon skill ranks.
Spend Advancement Points	Players buy Common skill ranks.
Choose Undertaking	Players choose an activity for their characters to perform (or possibly two activities, in the case of a longer stop).

Players should generally choose a place within a reasonable distance from the area where they were adventuring during the recent sessions of play, also taking into consideration how long the Fellowship phase is going to last and where and when they have agreed to meet up afterwards.

The Company Repairs to a Sanctuary

A number of locations are considered sanctuaries, special places particularly suited to support the needs of a company of adventurers, and inhabited by a host willing to welcome them. At the beginning of the game, there is only one place that adventurers may consider already a sanctuary: the town of Esgaroth on the Long Lake. Other locations may be gained access to by visiting them and choosing the Open New Sanctuary undertaking (see page 199).

Characters in a sanctuary dedicate their time to telling and listening to stories and to the exchange of adventuring experiences.

The Company Disbands Temporarily

When a company disbands temporarily, each player chooses the location where his character repairs to. Usually, heroes return home, as the player has decided that maybe the character needs to spend some time among his own folk, to refocus or meditate, or that he intends to develop his personal relationships at home.

When a hero intends to invest his earned Treasure, he needs to return home.

Standing Upkeep

Adventurers find friendship and allies in unlikely places, but are very quick to lose their respectability at home, unless some measure is taken to prevent that.

When a companion passes a Year's End Fellowship phase away from home (see Year's End on page 200), he must reduce his Standing rating by 1 point, unless he spends a number of Treasure points equal to his current Standing rating.

This upkeep cost represents what a hero does to ensure that his efforts in taking care of his own folk are widely recognised. Heroes with no Standing don't need to maintain it.

Finnulf from Dale has recently attained the coveted role of adviser to a local noble (Standing 4), but his adventuring career is requiring him to spend Yule-tide (and the Fellowship phase) at the House of Beorn, together with his companions. The Loremaster announces that Finnulf will see his Standing score decrease to 3, unless he spends 4 points of Treasure to maintain it at its current rating.

Activities

When players start relating their characters' actions, they should respect the time limit set by the duration of the phase and a geographical limit, defined by the place where their characters are supposed to be spending the phase.

Players are free to narrate in detail what their characters do, as long as they abstain from activities that require the introduction of new background information (like exploring a location they have never visited before, making the acquaintance of personalities they haven't encountered yet, and so forth). In general, they should avoid doing things that are better suited to an Adventuring phase.

Considering these restrictions, when his turn comes, each player is allowed to develop his character by spending his Experience points and Advancement points (see Character Development below), and then he is entitled to choose one undertaking for his hero to pursue (see Fellowship Phase Undertakings on page 197).

Character Development

One distinction between roleplaying games and other forms of gaming is that characters change through their experiences, much like people in real life, or heroes drawn from myth and fiction. When an adventurer has completed the task he set out to undertake, overcoming all obstacles that fate presented him with, he finds himself deeply transformed by the experience.

In *The One Ring*, characters earn Advancement points during play that will let them develop their Common skill scores, and gain Experience points at the end of every session, to spend them to improve their abilities or to acquire new ones.

Advancement Points

During the Adventuring phase, heroes can achieve extraordinary feats and grow in prowess as a result. In gaming terms, they may be granted a number of Advancement points.

Advancement points are used by players to develop their Common skill ratings during the Fellowship phase.

The rules for awarding Advancement points are detailed in **Part Six: The Loremaster**, on page 212, but this are the general principles:

- A player can be awarded 1 Advancement point when he uses a Common skill and succeeds.
- When this happens, the player records it on the character sheet by putting a 'check mark' on one of the circles to the right of the Skill group that the skill used belongs to.
- Since there are only 3 circles, player-heroes may earn up to a maximum of 3 points in each skill group in the course of an Adventuring phase.

When the Adventuring phase is over, all points are accounted for and the check marks are erased from the character sheet. The number of Advancement points received is kept track of on the back of the character sheet, in the appropriate box.

Experience Points

A hero's sense of accomplishment, his confidence and skill at arms and the hard-earned respect paid to him by his peers are represented by the award of Experience points.

These points allow players to buy Valour and Wisdom ranks, and to attain superior levels of proficiency in their chosen Weapon skills.

The rules for awarding Experience points are detailed in **Part Six: The Loremaster**, on page 212, but the general principles are here summarised:

- Players gain Experience points at the end of every gaming session they attend.
- They gain more points if they are considered to have progressed towards their company objective (see box).
- A number of bonus Experience points are awarded at the end of the Adventuring phase.

Players keep track of the number of Experience points they gain during play by updating their score on the character's sheet. To do so, they use the larger box; the smaller box, labelled Total, is used to record how many Experience points a player has received so far, including those he invested already in the development of his hero.

Spending Advancement Points

Players spend Advancement points to raise their Common skill ranks, using the costs in the table below. Players are not obliged to spend all their Advancement points, but may save them to acquire more expensive upgrades during a later Fellowship phase. Players can also buy multiple ranks in the same Common skill, as long as they pay the cost of every new level individually. Any remaining Advancement points are kept track of using the appropriate space on the back of the character sheet.

The Advancement Points Cost table below indicates the cost for raising any Common skill. If the ability to be raised is a Favoured skill (see Favoured skills, on page 86), then the player uses the costs listed in the second column to the right.

Advancement Points Costs:

New level to attain	Cost	Favoured Skill Cost
♦	4	3
♦♦	8	6
♦♦♦	12	9
♦♦♦♦	16	12
♦♦♦♦♦	20	15
♦♦♦♦♦♦	24	18

Company Objective

A company objective is a goal shared by all companions, something that is usually decided upon by all players at the beginning of a session of play. When they have finished considering how to proceed with the adventure presented to them by the Loremaster, the players should briefly confer and then choose a short or mid-term goal for them to try to achieve as a group.

- A company objective should be relevant, arising either from the situation introduced by the Loremaster in the first session of a new Adventuring phase, or from the latest developments in the phase to date.

Choosing a company objective helps the players to focus on their characters' motives for adventuring, and helps them to identify their own objectives for the current session of play. The Loremaster should let the heroes gain the supplementary Experience point under most circumstances, unless there are very good reasons to consider that the group hasn't progressed toward its goal (i.e. the possibility of denying this Experience point 'award' should not be used as a form of generic 'punishment' for the group).

Spending Experience Points

Heroes may spend their accumulated Experience points to gain a new rank in either Wisdom or Valour, and to enhance their proficiency in their Weapon skills.

Players are not obliged to spend all the Experience points they have received at once, but may save them from session to session to acquire more expensive upgrades, or they may spend a portion of them to get a smaller upgrade and save the remaining points for later. Whatever their choice, players should pick their options wisely, as the choices they make when spending Experience points determine the growth of a player-hero.

Players keep track of how many Experience points they gain and how many they spent so far by updating the relevant boxes on their character sheets

Buying a new Valour or Wisdom Rank

No other characteristics express the stature and maturity of a player-hero better than Wisdom and Valour. If a player chooses to spend his hard-earned Experience points to advance in one of the two ratings, he should keep in mind how much gaining a new rank is going to influence his character's life, both from a gaming standpoint and a from a storytelling angle.

Heroes may buy a rank in Valour or Wisdom if they have enough points to attain the new rating: the last column of the Experience Points Cost table below indicates the cost in Experience for buying a new rank. The character also gains a new Reward or Virtue (see page 102).

During the same Fellowship phase a hero can buy a maximum of one rank in either Wisdom or Valour (not both). When a player-hero advances in either Wisdom or Valour, care should be taken to adjust the scores of all related abilities and features.

Buying Weapon and Cultural Weapon Skill Ranks

The only method for a player-hero to raise the proficiency of his Weapon skills is to spend Experience points. Players are free to raise their skills as they see fit, as long as they have enough points. Players can buy multiple ranks in the same Weapon skill, as long as they pay the cost of every new level.

The Experience Points Cost table below indicates the cost for raising any combat skill, whether an individual Weapon skill or a Cultural Weapon skill.

Experience Points Costs:

Valour and Wisdom rank	Weapon Skill level	Cost to attain new rank or level
-	♦	2
2	♦♦	4
3	♦♦♦	6
4	♦♦♦♦	10
5	♦♦♦♦♦	16
6	♦♦♦♦♦♦	26

Improving a Weapon Skill from a Cultural Weapon Skill

It is possible to buy a level for an individual Weapon skill belonging to the category of a Cultural skill group the hero already possesses, starting from the proficiency level of the Cultural Weapon skill.

Lifstan has a Cultural Weapon skill for (Swords) ♦♦. His player wants to spend his Experience points to get him an individual skill rating in Long Sword: to do so, he spends 6 points and gives Lifstan a Long Sword ♦♦♦ level (starting from his Cultural skill level of ♦♦).

While there is no savings in buying a specific Weapon skill, players may choose to do this if planning to later make the new individual Weapon skill a favoured skill (as Cultural Weapon skills cannot be made into favoured skills).

Fellowship Phase Undertakings

When a player is done updating his character's abilities, he may choose to undertake a task for the rest of the Fellowship phase.

Players are invited to exercise their creativity and find new and exciting ways to spend a Fellowship phase. Often, players need look no further than the recently concluded Adventuring phase, as the story that was just completed might have provided several leads worth following, like a new friendship to consolidate or a new sanctuary to be granted access to. Any activity that could have a lasting impact on the character can be considered an undertaking.

Normally, a player is allowed to choose one single activity for his character to undertake. A longer Fellowship phase, like for example the one reserved for a year's end (see Year's End, on page 200) might allow for up to two undertakings instead. If the Loremaster agrees, in the case of a longer pause a player can choose up to two different Fellowship phase undertakings (the player cannot choose to repeat the same activity twice).

Here is a list of typical endeavours that characters may choose during a Fellowship phase — additional undertakings can be found in many of the setting and adventure supplements too.

Meet Patron

"I am looking for someone to share in an adventure that I am arranging, and it's very difficult to find anyone."

A patron is a usually renowned or powerful personality, who may from time to time offer a company a purpose to go adventuring, often providing support and counsel. Companions may choose to meet a patron when they are spending the Fellowship phase in the location where the individual is to be found, if the patron is available for a meeting.

A company may have several patrons at the same time, if its members are able to satisfy the requirements to ensure their allegiance (very often, these characters ask something in return for their friendship).

At the start of the game, two important personalities are particularly suited for the role of patrons: Beorn the Skinchanger and Radagast the Brown. The descriptions given on page 274 give directions on how to handle their introduction as patrons in the game.

Gain New Distinctive Feature or Speciality

Indeed, within a week they were quite recovered, fitted out in fine cloth of their proper colours, with beards combed and trimmed, and proud steps.

A player who has played his adventurer for a long time might eventually grow tired of the set of Traits belonging to his hero, and feel the need for a change. During a Fellowship phase, a player may replace an old Distinctive Feature or Speciality with a new one.

Players looking for a change should exercise some common sense when they choose the new Trait, and the old one being replaced, to avoid completely reinventing their characters. Note that changing a Speciality does not mean that the character has forgotten his prior talent — but that it does not represent one of his peculiar qualities

as it perhaps once did, as he put that feature aside to focus on other pursuits.

The new Trait may be chosen from any list of Distinctive Features or Specialities, or even invented by the player (who in this case needs the approval of the Loremaster).

Heal Corruption

Merely to be there was a cure for weariness, fear, and sadness.

Heroes feel the burden of the Shadow weigh heavily upon their shoulders long after their adventures are over. Their minds remain bent on dark thoughts, and visions haunt them in their dreams, if not even during their waking hours. But those who chose to fight the encroaching darkness have a way to oppose the taint of corruption:

Heroes reduce their current Shadow rating attempting a **Craft** or a **Song** roll with TN 14. On a successful roll, they reduce their score by 2 points on a success, 4 points on a great success, and 6 points on an extraordinary success (Permanent Shadow points gained when suffering from a bout of madness can never be healed – see page 226).

Characters spending their Fellowship phase in a sanctuary are entitled to two rolls, while heroes who returned home are allowed a single roll instead.

*Frár ends the current Adventuring phase with 5 Shadow points and repairs to Esgaroth with the company. Deeming the amount to be dangerous, he decides to reduce his Shadow score by choosing the Heal Corruption undertaking: he rolls **Craft**, getting an extraordinary success: he gets rid of all his Shadow points, restoring his score to zero.*

Companions belonging to different cultures resort to different methods to get rid of corruption: Dwarves usually turn to the forge to burn their frustration smiting the red iron on the anvil, Hobbits dedicate themselves to a beloved activity, like gardening, painting or writing a diary, and Elves and Men generally create, play or recite poems and songs.

Raise Standard of Living

The riches he had brought back from his travels had now become a local legend...

Having several chests filled with gold under the bed makes it far easier for an adventurer to go around with a pouch filled with coins. Players spending their Fellowship phase at home may reduce their heroes' Treasure rating to raise their Standard of Living as far as out-of-pocket expenses and the acquisition of equipment are concerned.

It costs 1 Treasure to spend one month at a Prosperous Standard of Living, and 2 Treasure to spend it at a Rich one. At the end of the month, the character must spend the amount again or revert to his previous Standard of Living.

Players may invest as much Treasure as they like to maintain their characters at a higher Standard of Living for longer periods of time.

Raise Standing

His gold and silver was largely spent in presents, both useful and extravagant...

The more adventurous members of most cultures indulge in the tradition of gift-giving or public spending, as a demonstration of their worth, affluence and loyalty to their culture, and as a mean of acquiring influence among their own folk.

Players spend Treasure points to raise their Standing rating, using the costs indicated in the table below. Players can also buy multiple ranks, as long as they pay the cost of every new level individually.

Raise Standing:

Standing to attain	Treasure points
1	12
2	24
3	36
4	48
5	60
6	72

Open New Sanctuary

"Hidden somewhere ahead of us is the fair valley of Rivendell, where Elrond lives in the Last Homely House."

In the course of their exploration of Wilderland, the company of adventurers will sooner or later find new places they might consider suitable for resting during a Fellowship phase. If, during an Adventuring phase the company has entered a location and has established friendly relations with its denizens, they can make it a sanctuary, securing permission to enter it regularly to spend a Fellowship phase there.

To turn a suitable location into a sanctuary, all companions must spend the phase there and choose Open New Sanctuary as their current undertaking.

The collective undertaking cements their relations with the important personalities of the place.

Receive Title

"I name you Elf-friend; and may the stars shine upon the end of your road!"

An adventurer's travels may take him far from home, and the deeds he accomplishes might be for a folk other than his own. But a hero will always be recognised as such, even in a foreign land.

A character who has performed appropriately valiant deeds during the Adventuring phase within the territory or realm of another Culture may – with the Loremaster's permission – choose the Receive Title undertaking.

In game terms, Receive Title means generally two things:

- The Standing rating of the adventurer now measures also his repute among another people. The hero may now affect the narration of a Year's End Fellowship phase as if he belonged to that Culture. Additionally, when a companion spends a Fellowship phase within the home settlement of that Culture, his score is not reduced, as if he returned home (see Standing Upkeep on page 193).

- The companion is granted a tract of land or a house to dwell upon. The size and features of the land or house are proportionate to the character's Standard of Living.

A character may receive a title from several different Cultures.

Culture	Title	Settlement	Granted...
Bardings	Thegn	Dale	A tract of land either in the Northern Dalelands or in the Upper or Nether Marches.
Beornings	Thane	Old Ford	A farmstead anywhere inside the land of the Beornings.
Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain	The Dwarves, very secretive about everything that concerns their native customs, do not grant titles to adventurers not belonging to their culture. Thus, a character may not choose the Receive Title undertaking for the Dwarven Culture.		
Elves of Mirkwood	Elf-friend	The 'Elf-friend' title is not a title, but a rather a blessing, bestowed upon a hero who gained the trust of the Elves. Nevertheless, an Elf-friend would indeed be welcomed by the Elvenking, and given a comfortable room at Thranduil's Halls.	
Hobbits of the Shire	Hobbits do not like nor welcome adventurers. Should they ever be forced by circumstances to actually recognise the valour of a non-Hobbit companion they might bestow upon him the honourary title of 'Bounder', and tolerate him to dwell in a house in Bree, or at least east of the river, in a house of wood, brick, or stone.		
Men of the Lake	Burgess	Lake-town	A house owned by the town council.
Woodmen	Hero of the Woodmen	Among the Woodmen	A guest-house in Woodmen-town, a cottage in Rhosgobel or a tree-house in Woodland Hall.

Year's End

When a Fellowship phase sees the end of a year of game time, as soon as all players have taken their individual turns, the Loremaster takes back the storytelling initiative to update the company on the changes that have taken place in the world that their characters are entitled to know about.

Middle-earth is a living world, whose history is unfolding at the same time as the player-heroes live their lives: for this reason, the Loremaster keeps the players informed on the actions of important personalities and the passing of major events affecting the land.

To determine what the heroes should be informed of, the Loremaster may use the information contained in the 'Tale of Years' chronology found in **Part Eight: The Campaign** as a starting point, and then tailor it around the current circumstances and whereabouts of the group of companions.

A Tale of Years entry relates how Gandalf the Grey visits the courts of Elves, Men and Dwarves of Wilderland, looking for new allies for the White Council. If the companions are spending their end of the year's Fellowship phase in any one of the places the Wizard will visit, the Loremaster may inform them of the coming of the Grey Pilgrim.

Player-hero Intervention

Players with a Standing score are allowed to elaborate on the year's end narration, to testify how their heroes may have affected events taking place in their home settlement or region. When the Loremaster has finished describing the changes occurring in their homeland for the current year's end, one or more players may intervene to let their characters participate in the events taking place (all players belonging to the same Culture may take part in the narration together).

Player-heroes may affect the course of events either directly or indirectly, depending on whether they can

plausibly be present or possess the resources or abilities to make a difference.

A player argues his case to intervene, describing how his character might have affected the current course of events; if the Loremaster accepts, then the player can propose a task roll summarising his intervention. Upon a successful roll, he briefly describes an alternative course of events describing the presence of his character or the effects of his influence.

Standing Rating

The intervention of a player must be proportionate to his current Standing score. An ordinary intervention, like being present when an important personality happens to pay a visit to a character's home town, requires a Standing of at least 1 (and probably a successful Courtesy roll). More dramatic or less plausible interventions require a higher Standing. For instance, being invited to speak at an exclusive gathering of the Wise is unlikely for heroes with a rating of less than 4.

Finnulf of Dale returned home for the Fellowship phase and hears about the coming visit of Gandalf the Grey. He is an important personality of the city (Standing 4), and has the ear of Lord Reinald, adviser to the King himself. Finnulf's player demands that his hero be invited to court when Gandalf will meet King Bard, and the Loremaster readily agrees. During the meeting, Finnulf asks to speak before the assembled dignitaries and the Wizard, and takes his chance to make an ***Inspire*** *roll to propose his King as a new member of the White Council.*

Starting the Following Adventuring Phase

When the Loremaster has finished bringing his players up to date and the players are done with their interventions, the Fellowship phase is over. The next Adventuring phase will take place during the first season of the following year.

If the Fellowship phase took place during the year (in other words, the Loremaster is running more than one adventure in that year), then skip this last phase and proceed straight to the start of the next adventure, with the characters leaving their sanctuary or reforming the company at the appointed place.

- Part Six: The Loremaster -

The - Loremaster -

Then a minstrel and loremaster stood up and named all the names of the Lords of the Mark in their order...

The first half of this volume shows players how to create their characters and provides the basic rules for playing the game. The next four parts of the guide are aimed at the Loremaster, the person who will run the game. It contains advice on playing successful games and more details on Middle-earth and its inhabitants, and presents the rules of the game in a greater depth.

If you are not going to take the part of the Loremaster, you do not need to read from this point of the volume onwards, and you definitely shouldn't read the introductory scenario in **Part Nine: The Marsh Bell**, as it will spoil the adventure for you if you know its secrets.

What does the Loremaster do?

The Loremaster has a more complicated role in the game than the players. While they are in control of their characters, the Loremaster is responsible for the entire game world: the description of locations; the actions of the people and creatures encountered; and the chain of events in the ongoing adventure.

It is the Loremaster's responsibility to introduce players who are new to roleplaying to the basics of the game. He is going to organise and oversee all gaming sessions, and must juggle the roles of storyteller and impartial judge, all the while playing the parts of the multitude of characters that the players encounter.

In practice, during a game session, the role of the Loremaster goes a little like this:

- **1. Set the scene:**
  At the start of a game session, the Loremaster gives a short summary of what happened in the previous session, then describes where the characters are and what is happening around them. This should provide some immediate prompts to action, making sure that the game gets off to a quick and involving start.

- **2. Listen to the players:**
  The players will react to the scene setting, possibly deciding on a new goal for their company or reminding themselves of their current goal. The Loremaster will play the parts of the other people present, who the players will interact with.

- **3. Describe the consequences of the players' actions:**
  The Loremaster responds to the players' interactions with people, calls for dice rolls for any necessary tasks or tests and describes the outcomes of the players' actions.

- **4. Describe events from the ongoing plot:**
  The Loremaster will involve elements of the adventure's plot as appropriate. These can be triggered either by the players' actions – for example, confronting a thief might lead to the villain revealing information that leads the players to the next part of the adventure – or by a timeline of events, for example such as the Loremaster deciding that Orcs will raid the settlement the players are staying in just after midnight on the third night of their stay.

The episode then proceeds using a combination of the last three steps, until it is resolved. This could mean that following this the players may begin a journey, or the Loremaster may quickly skim over a period of time when not much happens or where there are no real significant opportunity for players to take action. Both of these take place in narrative time (see page 21) – basically this means that a period of time is covered quickly, without the need to play through every action or every hour of each day.

When a new episode begins, the Loremaster goes back to step one of the list above and the flow of time reverts to normal.

The Middle-earth Loremaster

Arguably the most important task of a Loremaster is to act as the interface between the players and Middle-earth. Getting the Middle-earth "mood" right is essential in order to give the players the feeling that they are a part of the unfolding events at the end of the Third Age. Many players will be no strangers to this much-loved setting, and so familiarity with the source material will be important for the Loremaster.

In addition to helping create an authentic Middle-earth experience, taking another look at Tolkien's books will remind Loremasters of the many small details which can provide the seed of an adventure plot.

When choosing who will take the role of Loremaster, it would be sensible to choose the individual whose 'Tolkien lore' runs the deepest, as nothing ruins a good session of play as a player questioning the Loremaster's knowledge of the source material.

It can seem a daunting prospect at first, but being the Loremaster is an immensely satisfying role through which a Tolkien enthusiast can truly experience the world of Middle-earth as its own creator did: by orchestrating all the elements of the setting to produce their very own epic tales.

The Qualities of a Good Loremaster

One of the most enjoyable features of all roleplaying games is the creative collaboration between the Loremaster and his players, but it is also true that the Loremaster has much more to do than any one else. He is in charge of setting the atmosphere and tone of the game, describing what is happening and helping the players resolve their characters' actions. This chapter aims to equip Loremasters with the rules and advice they need to run successful and enjoyable games of *The One Ring*.

The Loremaster's duties can be broken down into three roles: Director, Referee and Narrator.

The Loremaster as Director

When he is setting up an Adventuring phase for his group of players, the Loremaster's job can be likened to that of a theatre or movie director, choosing and arranging the basic elements of the 'stage' that will see the characters act during the next session of play. By selecting the locales where the action is going to take place, and determining the nature of the problem that the characters will endeavour to solve, including the personalities and opponents that will try to hinder them (or help them), the Loremaster provides his players with the rough outlines of a plot, ready to be turned by the actions of players into a full-blown narrative.

The Loremaster must be a flexible director, ready to follow the players' improvisations when they take a route that he didn't anticipate. Loremasters who create their plots around a series of loose events that can be approached in a wide variety of ways are well-placed to deal with the tangents that players often embark on. The last thing a Loremaster should do is restrict his players unreasonably in order to make them conform to his idea of how the game should progress. Players must feel that their characters can attempt any action, no matter how limited the chances of a successful outcome.

Consistency

A Loremaster makes for a good director when he is able to weave a consistent storytelling experience out of a great number of elements, including the members of a company, their goals and ambitions, the places they visit and the people they meet. It is best not to plan to the smallest detail in advance, but to let the plot develop naturally, session after session. It is in fact easier, and probably wiser, to set each session up as if it was a separate episode of a longer story, with each new one building upon the consequences of the previous ones' using the prepared plot outline as a general guide.

The Loremaster as Referee

Roleplaying games are composed of rules combined with a set of social and storytelling conventions. While these conventions place roleplaying games outside the constraints of traditional board or card games (which are defined solely by their rules) the fundamental game mechanics used to regulate most of the situations encountered by players require the presence of an impartial moderator: the Loremaster.

The Loremaster must be ready to adjudicate the rules at all times, whether he is testing the mettle of the characters during the Adventuring phase, or helping the players determine the outcome of their choices during the Fellowship phase.

Behavioural issues amongst the players may also be handled by the Loremaster. Everyone involved in the game is there to have fun, but sometimes one person's sense of fun can impact on other people's enjoyment. This could include a player who is working against the interests of the company, or a player who tries to argue with the Loremaster's interpretation of Middle-earth. In most cases, a quiet and friendly word in private explaining the issue will sort things out, especially if the issue is raised quickly and courteously.

Fairness

When acting as a referee, the Loremaster should strive to be fair and to apply the rules properly and impartially. Tasks are meant to provide players with a challenge. The rules governing them are there to judge whether a character was up to the test or not, and to reward him with success if he was, or to punish him with the consequences of failure if he wasn't. A partial Loremaster can easily ruin a game, as an unfair call when applying a rule brings the rules themselves to the players' attention and their immersion in the game is interrupted.

Conversely, the Loremaster shouldn't spoil the fun of the game by relying excessively on the rules alone. Making players roll the dice for every action their character makes becomes boring and also takes some of the drama out of the tests that really matter. Moreover, structuring an adventure so that key discoveries or achievements depend on the result of a single roll is a recipe for frustration. There should always be another way of making progress.

The Loremaster as Narrator

A large part of the Loremaster's role is that of a storyteller, using words to portray what is happening to the group of heroes. He is the eyes and ears of his players, the main source of information to be fed to the collective imagination of the group. Luckily, the Loremaster is far from being alone in this task, as the entire group will have some knowledge of the source material, and the Loremaster can draw on a range of images and details that the players are already familiar with: often, a few well-chosen words are enough to give a vivid picture of what is going on, as the situation reminds the players of a scene from the books.

Creativity

A quick and, rich imagination is a precious quality for a Loremaster, especially when coupled with strong communication skills. Evocative descriptions focus the attention of all players and encourage their interaction, and the ability to build the players' reactions and plans into the ongoing adventure will lead to the most involved and enjoyable games.

Tolkien's Canon

For many years, fans of the literary works of J.R.R. Tolkien have debated the existence of a consistent canon that firmly defines the world and history of Middle-earth, as described in *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* and later publications. This has often been cited as one of the major hurdles to roleplaying games set in Middle-earth, as it is very likely that the characters' adventures will 'interfere' with the actions of the saga's known protagonists and 'break' the canon's consistency.

While a quick and easy answer to such concerns might well be that 'there is no such thing as an established Tolkien's canon,' it is interesting to delve into the subject a little bit more, as there is a lot that a Loremaster may learn from tackling this apparently insurmountable obstacle.

Subjective Sources

When facing the dilemma of altering facts perceived as being part of canon, a Loremaster could consider the information that Tolkien related in his stories not as ascribed to an infallible, all-knowing narrator, but to witnesses of the times, individuals who are subject to errors and personal bias (for example, *The Hobbit* relates the content of Bilbo Baggins' memoirs). This literary device served Tolkien well in his effort to create a believable 'ancient history' which includes the inevitable inconsistencies that might come from it being composed by different chroniclers, and there is no reason why a Loremaster cannot do the same, especially if he needs

to change an 'established' date or the details behind a known 'fact' or 'historical' figure.

To get an idea of how much the writer's perspective can distort perceptions, and possibly facts, one need look no further than the books: for example, The Lord of the Rings can find it difficult to reconcile the image they have of Gimli, the redoubtable axe-wielding warrior of Erebor, and the Dwarven companions of Bilbo, who, captured by Trolls, Goblins, Spiders and Wood-elves, more often than not end up being saved by their Hobbit burglar, Bilbo...

Filling the Blanks

Tolkien wove an incredibly rich narrative tapestry, composed of believable characters set against a vivid landscape and moved by motivations firmly grounded in myth and tradition. But even such an extensive and intricate chronicle does not explore thoroughly every nook and cranny of this imagined world and period; far from it. As the narrative focus in the books shifts from one region to another, many locations and the events related to them are left in the dark, or are only briefly touched upon.

This approach, aimed to give a subjective perspective to the protagonists of the stories, who are not familiar with every corner of Middle-earth, gives the Loremaster the freedom to create his own stories. The setting provided in this guide is an example of this – the Wilderland area is introduced in *The Hobbit* but is then virtually unmentioned when the narrative advances to Frodo's days. Armed with the knowledge from the stories, and supported by the many hints and notes found in the appendices, a Loremaster has everything he needs to create a credible and exciting setting for his own chronicles.

It is all about Characters

Another interesting view on the canon comes from the author himself. While certainly very protective of his own creations in general, Tolkien stressed several times that what was ultimately dear to him were the integrity of his characters and their motivations, more than the preservation of his plots or other details. By applying this perspective to a *The One Ring Roleplaying Game* chronicle, it would be probably not far from the mark to say that the game will remain true to its literary sources if the Loremaster pays due attention to the treatment of the canonical characters, and if its players strive to create and play plausible heroes.

Last, but not Least...

When approached today, the bulk of Tolkien's Middle-earth-related publications give the impression of an immutable and consistent corpus. But when the author was alive, he was constantly rewriting and rearranging his own material, even going to the point of making substantial changes to existing publications to be inserted in new, revised editions. These changes were sometimes aimed to correct inconsistencies, but more often than not they were introduced to accommodate later plot changes and alterations. It is thus possible to assume that not even Tolkien looked at his own work as being bound by any sort of established canon, and that even the chronologies he carefully created were to be considered provisional at best.

In light of these considerations, all new Loremasters are encouraged not to feel intimidated, and simply go ahead and add their own storytelling thread to the Professor's wonderful and epic narrative tapestry.

Creating Adventures

For fans of Middle-earth, the game can be much more than overcoming a series of tests and challenges: it is a way to interact with a well-loved world, its history and its inhabitants.

This section presents a number of questions to help a Loremaster create adventures that grab the players' attentions and hold it to the end of every session. The questions don't all need to be answered if one or more don't seem appropriate to the adventure being created.

When?

When is the adventure taking place? Is the season going to be relevant to the course of events? Or do the events described in the chronology determine when the adventure occurs? Time is a very relevant element for players in *The One Ring*, as whatever happens to them is going to

become an episode of their characters' lives. Moreover, important events involving the company will eventually find their rightful place in the game's tale of years, along side the historical facts composing of the Twilight of the Third Age.

Current Season

The passing of the seasons is a powerful descriptive tool. Wilderland goes through dramatic transformations from summer to autumn, and from winter to spring, allowing the Loremaster to choose from wildly different palettes of colour and descriptive moods, resulting in a panorama that is always changing, and always new. All cultures living in the North follow different lifestyles across the twelve months of a year, and honour the passing of time with seasonal festivals and ceremonies.

Adventurers can witness seasonal activities, such as the gathering in of the harvest. There is a lot of flavour that can be added to an adventure by simply keeping a calendar and reflecting the changes as the seasons pass, but the seasons can also have a direct effect on the game. Crossing the Wild in winter is going to pose a much more serious challenge than doing it in spring, as trails disappear and wolves prowl the land in search of food. The mountains themselves seem to heed a more wicked call when the passes are thick with snow, and the winds rage around their peaks...

It is for good reasons that most companies will sit out the winter months in the warmth and safety of a Fellowship phase.

Current Year

The Tale of Years found on page 253 provides a timeline for the first years of the *The One Ring* campaign. There is nothing like the passage of time to make the players feel they are part of a living world: year after year, the interweaving of player-generated events and timeline entries creates a campaign with depth and texture.

There are many ways to incorporate wider events into the characters' adventures. They could witness a great gathering, cross paths with groups involved in the events or discuss the goings-on with the people they encounter on their journey. Every game session can benefit greatly from making the company's exploits part of the chronology, provided that the focus of the narration remains firmly set on the deeds of the player-heroes.

Where?

Where is the action going to take place? This question may be answered in two ways: either the precise location of the adventure is so vital to the action that the Loremaster must choose a specific place from those described in this guide or in the source material, or the setting requires simply a generic setting and any ruin, forest glade or river will do. In any case, the Loremaster should take into consideration a place that is either close to the current location of the company, or one that they can reach conveniently (using the Journey rules). In the latter case, the journey itself gives the Loremaster the chance to set up a challenging situation, one that could be worth playing out for an entire session.

Exploring Middle-earth

Once in a while, the adventure will bring the company to one of the places described in Tolkien's books: for some players, this is what role-playing in Middle-earth is all about. Having the company enter the great hall of Beorn for the first time, or seeing the Lonely Mountain on the horizon, can turn an ordinary Adventuring phase into a particularly meaningful experience.

When this happens, the Loremaster should let the players interact with the setting. What the players remember of a place they have read about should be brought to life for them and incorporated into the narrative. One way to achieve this is to challenge their skills with some simple tests. For example, while the company is in the halls of the Elvenking, a roll of Song might let a character recognise that the litany he hears tells of the deeds of the Hobbit burglar who spent some time there, or a roll of Search might reveal a Hobbit rhyme scratched on a wall in a shadowy corner.

What?

What is the adventure about? This question pretty much defines the heart of the Adventuring phase, and summarises the information that the Loremaster presents to his players at the beginning of the first game session. So, what is going on? A treasure was recently stolen and now the previous owner is looking for someone to bring it back; an important personality the group was meant to meet was kidnapped or killed by an unknown threat; the adventurers arrive at a village hours before enemies put the place under siege, and now the heroes can't get out. Any situation putting the heroes in the right place at the right time in a moment of crisis is a good starting point.

Often, the Loremaster might find it effective to begin an Adventuring phase with a direct challenge, something that provokes the players into action right from the start. Then, as already stated in the introduction to this chapter, the Loremaster doesn't even need to plan a complete series of events, as the players will eventually give him material to improvise upon as the game progresses: as the players overcome an obstacle, their actions will give the Loremaster ideas for the next challenge, leaving him free to keep the plot as open-ended as possible, with every step depending on the result of the one preceding it.

Simplicity

The object of an Adventuring phase does not necessarily have to be tied to an epic endeavour or be about a world-threatening menace – at least not every time. In The One Ring, an epic level of gameplay is reached by playing through many smaller events that reveal their greater significance only when woven together. The Loremaster can compose his own retelling of the Twilight of the Third age without worrying too much about making it truly 'epic' right off the bat: in time, everything a hero endures will be easily raised to a greater importance, especially when set against the game's overarching motif; the struggle against the Shadow. Adventures can be kept simple, especially in the early years of the timeline, to let the players savour the experience of discovering Middle-earth. For example, simply picking a worthy opponent or an interesting location from **Part Seven: The Shadow** or **Part Eight: The Campaign** will provide the Loremaster and his players with enough material to keep the game going for multiple sessions.

Plot Twists

Once in a while the Loremaster might want to complicate things by adding a twist or two to an otherwise simple plot. The players will then have to figure out how to 'solve' the adventure, instead of simply being asked to endure or overcome a series of difficulties. In some cases, the Adventuring phase might end without having provided a clear answer, opening the opportunity for investigating the

matter further during the subsequent Fellowship phase, or during a following Adventuring phase.

Why?

Why should the heroes get involved in the adventure in the first place? Is there something that interests them personally? This question directly addresses the reasons why the characters composing a group have chosen to become adventurers: heroes brave dangers that other individuals normally try to stay clear of, usually because they have a personal stake that pushes them to do it. While the very concept of adventuring provides a simple answer to the question, the Loremaster should consider with attention which motivational 'buttons' are more effective in capturing the attention of his players.

During the first few games, it can be useful to consider the Callings chosen by the players for their heroes, or even their distinctive Traits. Once all heroes have a number of entries in their personal 'Tale of Years' on the backs of their character sheets the Loremaster will find it easy to give them personal reasons to get involved in an Adventuring phase. As the game progresses, the players themselves will start exploring their characters' individual goals and callings, and might even end up suggesting personalised adventures that centre on these factors.

Who?

Tolkien has populated his stories with a multitude of memorable characters and the Loremaster will have to do the same for an adventure to be successful. Will one or more known personalities feature in the story? Will the adventure introduce a new recurring character to the heroes? The personalities controlled by the Loremaster are a fundamental element of any game, as their words and actions enliven the adventure.

Role Models

The deeds of a renowned character can be a powerful inspiration for a player looking for an example of what it means to live in Middle-earth. There is nothing like getting to meet a favourite hero to help integrate player-heroes into the epic tapestry of the campaign, as it adds an additional layer of involvement with the events that the players are witnessing.

Supporting Cast

Loremaster characters should be used sparingly, and with careful judgement. Players do not like to see their heroes play second fiddle to a powerful Loremaster character. To avoid this risk, the Loremaster could try the opposite, with the famous character in need of the heroes' help, or even needing to be rescued outright (a twist that the author himself often resorted to).

Patrons

During play, heroes may adopt one or more important personalities as their company's patrons. A source of plot hooks and support for the group, and an easy way to make a known individual a recurring motif in their characters' adventuring, a patron should not be reduced to a simple gameplay asset, but should be worked into the narrative as an active element.

The descriptions of Beorn and Radagast starting on page 274 contain several suggestions on how to introduce these important characters as patrons in the game. The Loremaster should be careful here though, as using the same patron to quickly set up a mission-based Adventuring phase may quickly turn into a cliché.

Running an Adventuring Phase

Simplifying things a bit, every Adventuring phase session can be said to unfold along a similar structure:

Introduction

At the beginning of the first session of play, the Loremaster presents the current situation to his group of players. This usually sets the date (*When*), a location (*Where*) and defines an introductory situation (*What*), including the information currently available to the heroes and containing story hooks for involving the company of adventurers personally (*Why*) and helping them in choosing their Company objective.

Be Prepared

Before the game begins, the Loremaster should have at least a generic idea about how the plot of the adventure should unfold. For example, when the players arrive in

a small woodland hamlet and discover that an unknown and unnatural predator has been preying on their livestock, the Loremaster should know the precise nature of the threat, and have prepared a rough sequence of events around which the adventure should flow.

Perhaps the beast will attack the hamlet every night, or follow a pattern which the players can identify to help them capture or track it? Maybe the beast will carry off a child, instigating a race against time to try and recover the infant alive? The Loremaster needs to have an idea of when these events will happen.

In addition, he will need to make sure that he and his players are familiar with any rule-related information specific to the adventure. If the characters are expected to subdue the beast in combat, the Loremaster will need to have decided on its statistics in order to make that part of the game flow well.

Gameplay

The game unfolds with the players reacting to the introduction and taking action to investigate and resolve the challenges set before them. During the session, the Loremaster is responsible for every element of the narration that doesn't depend directly on the player-heroes and their choices.

The players have full control over what their heroes do and how they do it, but the Loremaster interprets the success of their actions and how every part of the world, from Loremaster characters to creatures and the environment, reacts to them.

Be Creative

The key to a great game of *The One Ring* is to leave the players in control of their own actions. The Loremaster should not frustrate the characters' efforts or prevent them from taking a certain direction just because he was not prepared for it. On the contrary, if their proposed course of play is interesting and appropriate to the situation, then the Loremaster should favour it over his own pre-designed intentions.

This might require the Loremaster to make up details as the game progresses, based upon his knowledge of the world and the general sequence of events in the adventure. While maybe a little intimidating at first, this gets easier as the Loremaster becomes more and more familiar with the game and its mechanics.

Preparation also helps a great deal in these situations – the better the Loremaster knows the area the story takes place in, and the actions and plots that are going on in the background, the better he will be able to give the players their freedom while keeping the adventure coherent.

End of Session

When a gameplay session reaches its conclusion, the Loremaster and his players face two possible situations, based on whether the companions have unravelled the plot they encountered, or need more time to get to the end of it.

The Story Continues

If the Adventuring phase didn't reach a satisfactory conclusion by the end of the session, the gameplay will resume at a later date with another Adventuring phase session.

When the group of players meets again, the Loremaster will start the new session by summarising what happened previously – the players choose a new company objective (or keep the same if it wasn't achieved by the end of the previous session) and gameplay resumes.

End of the Story

If on the contrary the current story has reached its conclusion, the Loremaster draws the final curtain on the adventure.

When the Loremaster is done adjudicating the number of supplementary Experience points that the players will receive (see overleaf), the Adventuring phase is finally over, and the game progresses with the Fellowship phase (or the Fellowship phase is planned to start at the beginning of the following session, depending on the time available).

Awarding Advancement Points

As hinted at on page 194, heroes gain Advancement points during the Adventuring phase by making use of their abilities. When a hero succeeds in a roll using a Common skill, he may be awarded by the Loremaster with 1 Advancement point.

It is the Loremaster's duty to judge whether a hero deserves an Advancement point for his successful roll or not (even though players are free to ask for the reward).

The Loremaster bases his decision on the number of check marks that a companion has already received during play in the skill group comprising the Common skill used:

- If no circles have been checked yet, the Loremaster should feel free to award the Advancement point upon any successful roll.
- If one circle has been checked already, then the Loremaster should grant an Advancement point only if the action accomplished something out of the ordinary: the player obtained a great or an extraordinary success, OR the player can reinforce his skill roll with the invocation of a pertinent Trait (the Trait must be deemed significant to the action).
- If two circles have been checked, then the Loremaster should give 1 Advancement point only if something exceptional was accomplished: the player obtained a great or an extraordinary success, AND the player can reinforce his skill roll with the invocation of a pertinent Trait.

Remember that the three circles that follow each skill group on the character sheet indicate also that each group can receive a maximum of three Advancement points. No more Advancement points can be awarded to skills from that group until after the next Fellowship phase.

Awarding Experience Points

As seen on page 195, all heroes receive Experience points at the end of every gaming session.

- Players receive 1 Experience point each at the end of every gaming session they attend.
- If the Loremaster deems that the group has made substantial progress toward the achievement of their chosen company objective, each hero is awarded with 1 supplementary Experience point.
- Finally, a number of supplementary Experience points are awarded by the Loremaster at the end of the Adventuring phase. Generally, this bonus should not exceed an approximate ratio of 1 Experience point for every two game sessions in the Adventuring phase (for example, a four-session adventure should yield a final reward of 2 supplementary Experience points).

This final bonus is meant to reward the group of players for their commitment to the game, especially if they achieved something remarkable. Players who solved a difficult situation in a clever and unexpected fashion, or interpreted their characters with conviction, or constantly showed respect for the source material certainly deserve the bonus.

Advancement Points Awards Ratio

Loremasters should consider that the Advancement point costs for raising Common skills (see page 195) have been calculated considering that a companion should gain an average of 4 Advancement points for each session of play (more in the first session, as checks are easier to get when all boxes are empty).

If the players are constanlty gaining less points, then the Loremaster should encourage them to make a more profitable use of their Traits – for example by keeping a list of which ones are represented in the group and pointing them out during gameplay.

Experience Points Awards Ratio

The amount of Experience points to give to players has been calculated considering an average of 3 sessions of play for each complete Adventuring phase. Keeping this pace, each player would receive an average of 6 Experience points, plus 1 or 2 additional points, at the end of each story.

This ratio can be adjusted based on the gaming habits of your group: if your games tend to be played in long single sessions (4 hours of more), cutting the number of sittings down to approximately half our average, then you should compensate handing out more supplementary Experience points at the end of the story. If on the contrary your games tend to take multiple sessions, then cut down the final Experience bonus.

- Rolling Dice -

'He is bold and cunning. Even now he plays a game with peril and wins a throw.'

The rules of the game are a framework used to interpret the actions of the characters. The rules help to determine what a character can achieve, as well as providing a way for the themes of the game like Hope, Wisdom and Valour to directly influence the story. Rules also support the game by helping the Loremaster to provide players with a believable environment, where actions succeed or fail due to tangible reasons such as the characters' level of ability and the difficulty of what they attempt to do; a world where the choices that players make for their characters have real consequences.

Managing the game system properly is absolutely vital for the creation of a truly cooperative role-playing experience, and one of the ways to do it is to apply its rules consistently and fairly, to dispel any doubts about the role of the Loremaster as an impartial interface between the players and the game world. As previously stated, nothing is more destructive to a player's suspension of disbelief and immersion in the game than the feeling that his player's fate is being dictated by the Loremaster's choices and not his own. This doesn't mean that the rules must be applied rigidly at all costs, though. The system for *The One Ring* has been designed to be as flexible as possible, to allow room for the Loremaster and players to customise it and tailor it to model their style of play.

The rules are meant to support the game, not to constrain it, and so Loremasters and players are invited to use all the mechanics as they prefer, keeping what they like and changing or throwing away what they don't — although it's probably not a good idea to do it in the middle of a game session, or without first agreeing upon what should be changed: as the presentation of the game in this guide reflects, the game rules are not the province of the Loremaster alone, but are an invaluable resource to be shared with all participants.

Resolving Actions

One of the fundamental duties of the 'Loremaster as referee' is to assist the players in determining the outcome of their characters' actions, whether they are being resolved as tasks or tests (see page 139). An action is a player's foremost means of interacting with the game world — in gaming terms, it is a player's way to make a 'move,' or to react to a challenge. The characters' differing levels of abilities with different actions are an important factor that distinguishes one adventurer from another, and what makes each of them a valuable member of a company.

Not all actions must be resolved using dice: characters should be allowed to succeed automatically whenever they are attempting routine or dramatically irrelevant tasks, or whenever their capabilities should reasonably place them beyond the risk of failure.

A sparing but considered use of dice helps in speeding up the game and reinforces the players' trust in the neutrality of the Loremaster.

As a consequence, the rules concerning action resolution should be applied when the outcome of a task or test is uncertain, or when it is not enough to simply know whether a character succeeds or fails, but the quality of his

performance. When this is the case, there are two factors that must be determined: which ability is the correct one to use, and the Target Number the player must match or beat with the roll.

Selecting the Right Skill

Sometimes it might be difficult to decide which of the 18 Common skills is the most relevant for the roll. It might be easier to first identify which skill group best fits the action. Does the action sound like something better solved through a character's potential for personality, movement, perception, survival, custom or vocation?

For example, Bruno's player-hero, Ted the burglar from Bywater, has been invited to address a gathering of Dwarves in an attempt to secure their assistance in a future raid against an Orc-fastness. The player is unsure about which skill to use, and asks the Loremaster if it should be a custom or a personality skill? Claudio, the Loremaster, decides that it is not the moment for pleasantries and determines that a personality skill will be used.

When the skill group has been identified, the acting player or the Loremaster selects a skill from the group that best describes the action. If the choice still proves to be difficult, consider how the character is approaching the action: is the character relying more on his Body, Heart, or Wits?

The Personality group contains the skills: Awe, Inspire and Persuade, all skills almost equally suited to reproduce Ted the burglar's address to the Dwarven council. After a quick look at his character sheet, Bruno decides that Ted will try to move the bearded listeners with a heartfelt plea for alliance. The Personality skill related to Heart is Inspire, and the Loremaster agrees with the choice.

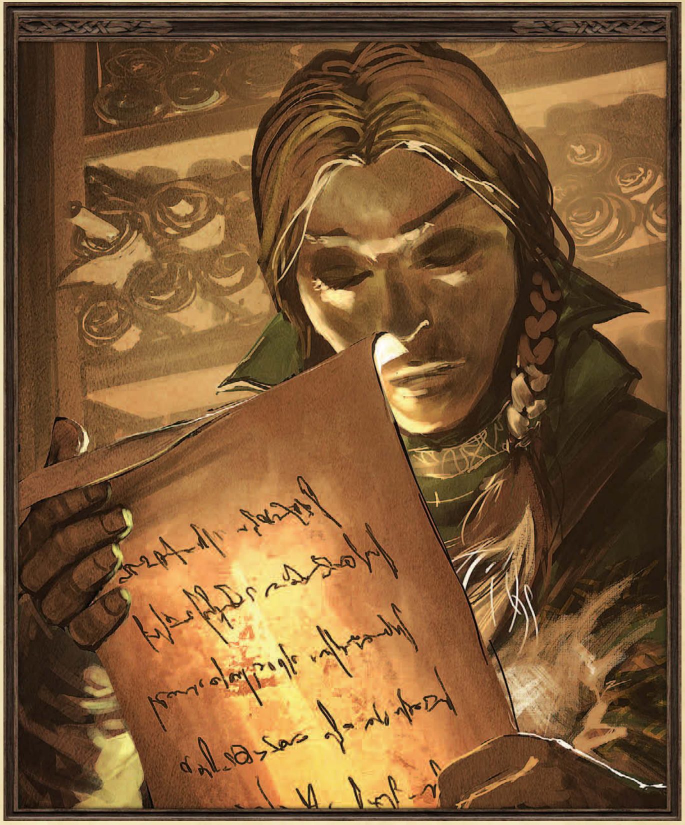
Moderate Difficulty (TN 14)

The One Ring is a game about the deeds of a group of heroes. For this reason, the rules for resolving actions concentrate on the protagonists' strengths and weaknesses, leaving aside the need to highlight every minutia of the odds they face.

- As a rule of thumb, the majority of actions attempted during a session of play should be set at a moderate difficulty level (TN 14).

This rating makes for a challenging obstacle. Less-talented heroes will often be required to spend a point of Hope to succeed, or should consider buying a higher level of proficiency soon.

The Loremaster is advised to apply this default level for most actions, especially tasks proposed by players. He should only consider using different difficulty levels when the circumstances strongly suggest that the task should be easier or harder.



Changing the Difficulty Level

When the Loremaster tinkers with the Target Number of an action, he is making an important statement about the relevance and purpose of the roll. By using a TN lower than 14, it is very likely that a character is going to succeed, especially if a player is willing to spend Hope to get an Attribute bonus; the outcome remains uncertain only when the acting hero has a poor rating, is out of Hope points or is Weary.

When a Loremaster sets a TN higher than 14, he is making it very hard for characters rolling less than 3 Success

dice to succeed, and should only consider doing so if the circumstances clearly call for it, or when the consequences of a success are going to be very positive for the acting hero – nothing is more frustrating than making a very good roll, or spending a Hope point, just to find that the outcome of the action is barely relevant. Additionally, overcoming challenges set at a severe or daunting difficulty should almost always guarantee an Advancement point (see page 212).

The descriptions found below can help determine if a task or test requires a higher or lower difficulty level.

Target Number Levels:

TN	Difficulty (skill rank ♦♦♦)
10	Very Easy
12	Easy
14	**Moderate**
16	Hard
18	Severe
20	Daunting

As the table above shows, Target Numbers are organised along six levels of difficulty, from *very easy* (TN 10) to *daunting* (TN 20).

When the rules mention the raising or lowering of a TN tier or level they refer to the six TN levels above.

*For example, when a **moderate** TN is raised by one level, it becomes a **hard** TN.*

The six difficulty levels should not be seen as a rigid framework, to be memorised and rigidly applied, but as a set of flexible guidelines. A Target Number can be set at any value ranging from a weak rating of 5 to an almost unbeatable 30, or even more.

Very Easy Actions (Target Number 10)

These are the actions that most adventurers can accomplish effortlessly and that under most circumstances should not require a roll.

*Examples of very easy actions include influencing a weak-willed individual intoxicated by a strong wine (use of a Personality skill), or climbing a wall as tall as the character climbing it (roll of **Athletics**), and so on.*

Easy Actions (Target Number 12)

These are actions that require a certain familiarity within a specific field (a skill score of at least 1) or a modicum of concentration. Easy actions can often be resolved automatically instead.

*These are actions like hiding a small object among the folds of a robe without being noticed (roll of Stealth), recognising and following the tracks of a large animal in the wild (roll of **Hunting**), or reading a book written in a known foreign tongue (roll of **Lore**).*

Moderate Actions (Target Number 14)

The default difficulty of most actions, this TN reflects a situation where success is uncertain for the average adventurer. This could include actions that require a specific expertise, or that can be accomplished only through effort and concentration (and possibly an expenditure of Hope).

*Spotting a well-hidden trap (roll of **Search**), impressing a local militiaman (roll of **Awe**), or gaining a stranger's aid in the face of a common threat (roll of **Persuade**) are all examples of moderate actions.*

Hard Actions (Target Number 16)

These are actions presenting a serious obstacle to any adventurer not possessing a high level of ability or knowledge.

*Actions that require such a Target Number could include opening a new path through a dense wood after a rainstorm (roll of **Explore**), or guessing the secret password that unlocks a magic door from the cryptic inscription carved upon it (roll of **Riddle**).*

Severe Actions (Target Number 18)

Severe actions are tasks demanding the formidable abilities of experts.

*Singing a Hobbit song in a way that could impress an Elven prince (roll of **Song**), understanding the opening mechanisms that operate an ancient Dwarven gate (roll of **Craft**), or spotting a great eagle flying high in a stormy sky (**Awareness** roll) are examples of actions requiring a severe target number.*

Daunting Actions (Target Number 20)

These are actions whose level of difficulty places them barely within the capability of most adventurers, and that can usually only be completed thanks to a stroke of luck or by invoking a substantial Attribute bonus.

*Examples of daunting actions include breaking free of sturdy Orc-chains (roll of **Athletics**), reading an ancient and ruined text compiled in a barely-known tongue (roll of **Lore**) or improvising a riddle worthy of a Dragon while being threatened at sword-point (roll of **Riddle**).*

- Loremaster - Characters

"Not the Gandalf who was responsible for so many quiet lads and lasses going off into the Blue for mad adventures. Anything from climbing trees to visiting Elves - or sailing in ships, sailing to other shores! Bless me, life used to be quite inter - I mean, you used to upset things badly in these parts once upon a time. I beg your pardon, but I had no idea you were still in business."

Loremaster characters are possibly the best tools to help create a believable setting. During the game, heroes meet a number of individuals whose purpose and description has been tailored to suit the adventure being played — from the Beorning boy who meets the adventurers when they enter his village to deliver a message to them from his lord, to the aloof Elven emissary who contacts them to offer them a mission. In addition, the adventurers interact with even a greater number of minor Loremaster characters, an army of 'extras' that populate the villages they enter, crowd the streets they cross and frequent the inns they stop in to get some rest.

Most of the time, the interaction of a player-hero with Loremaster characters is resolved without die rolls – natural conversation and knowledge of the setting are all that is required.

No die roll is required when the Bride addresses a Woodman boy she meets on a path near a farmer's homestead, to tell him to go and get his father – the boy can be assumed to recognise the Bride as belonging to his own folk, and the sight of a group of armed adventurers is certain to send the boy running to find his father, regardless of his strength of spirit.

But at times the Loremaster needs additional information about an individual encountered by the company, either because the interaction develops (or degenerates!) during play thanks to the course of action chosen by the group of players, or because the purpose behind the introduction of the Loremaster character was of greater importance in the first place.

When this happens, the Loremaster has a number of ways to manage the interaction with a Loremaster character: to treat it simply as a normal action with an uncertain outcome and thus requiring a die roll (see Loremaster Characters as Obstacles below), or to develop the character further and give it the stature of a Named Loremaster character, or even to turn it into an adversary, giving him the necessary characteristics to use the character as an opponent in combat (see Adversaries, on page 230).

Loremaster Characters as Obstacles

When the actions of the players or the purpose of a Loremaster character puts an individual in conflict with the goals of the heroes, the Loremaster can resolve the situation using the normal rules for action resolution:

- First, the ability deemed to be most appropriate to settle the situation is selected (by the player if the roll is a task, or by the Loremaster if it is a test) and then the Loremaster chooses a difficulty for the die roll, usually setting it at the default TN of 14. The default TN can be altered to let the challenge better reflect the description of the individual given by the Loremaster.

Lifstan joins in a boasting contest with a group of Bardings at the court of the King. His player proposes an Inspire roll, and everyone approves it. The Loremaster proceeds to select a difficulty for the roll and settles for a TN of 16, justified by the presence of a grizzled veteran of the Battle of Five Armies.

- If the Loremaster character has been given an Attribute level for any reason (either because it is an adversary or a Named Loremaster character – see below) then the TN can be made equal to the character's Attribute level plus 10.

In the example above, if the veteran of the Battle of Five Armies was a named Loremaster character – Reinald, one of the King's advisers, statted at having a superior Attribute level of 8 – the difficulty would have been set at TN 18 (10 plus Reinald's Attribute level).

Sneaking past someone, trying to persuade or intimidate him, attempting to judge whether someone is lying, even outrunning an individual are all examples of actions that do not need to be turned into opposed actions against a fully detailed character, but that can be handled simply and quickly as rolls against an appropriate Target Number.

Traits

A quick way to customise the description of a Loremaster character is to choose a Trait picking either a Speciality or one or more Distinctive features those available to heroes (or even inventing one on the spot). Such Traits define an individual at a very simple level (a *Trusted* servant, a *Keen-eyed* guard, a wise man learned in *Herb-lore*) and help the Loremaster in portraying the character. Additionally, the Trait has a game-related effect:

If a Loremaster character possesses a Trait that is applicable to a die roll that a hero is making, then the default difficulty level of TN 14 should be raised by one level if the Trait can be deemed to positively benefit the Loremaster character, or lowered if the Trait can be considered to favour the hero's intent instead.

If Lifstan is trying to get some information out of a Smith of Erebor encountered in Lake-town, he might find it complicated, as the Dwarf is described as Secretive (raising the default TN to 16).

Named Loremaster Characters

Sometimes, describing a Loremaster character as a "young and clever Beorning woman" isn't enough, especially if the heroes push the interaction with an individual to the point that the Loremaster needs some more detail to keep the conversation going: they might try to persuade her to guide them through a forest they never explored before, but that she knows perfectly well as she was born in a village nearby. Or they might beg her to help them with a wounded and unconscious companion that happened to be the only hero in the group with some knowledge of healing...

If this happens, the Loremaster should give the character an individual name, and make up some details using the following guidelines (most of the rules presented here are similar to those employed to describe adversaries in **Part Seven: The Shadow**).

Attribute Level

The first clue to the general 'power level' of a named Loremaster character is their Attribute level score. This numerical rating replaces the normal ratings of Body, Heart and Wits. The Loremaster can refer to this score in three ways:

- When setting the difficulty of an action made by a hero that is directly affected by the Loremaster character (see Loremaster Characters as Obstacles above);
- Adding it always as a bonus to a roll when a character or creature uses an ability indicated as favoured;
- If the character is an adversary or is described as a fighter, the Attribute level is applied as a Damage bonus when the creature or individual hits an opponent rolling a great or extraordinary success (non-fighters do not get any Damage bonus).

The Loremaster determines the Attribute level of a character by choosing it from the table below (unless it was already specified by the adventure being played or the character is an adversary).

Attribute Level:

Rating	Description	Examples
1-2	poor	Weakling, young man, puny monster
3-4	average	Seasoned merchant, witty innkeeper, attentive city guard
5-6	good	Royal envoy, experienced guide, worthy warrior
7-8	superior	Veteran warrior or captain, fearsome monster
9-10	outstanding	Outstanding hero, Elf-lord, lethal monster
11-12	prodigious	Dragon, creature from another age

Abilities

A Loremaster character can be given a number of skills if the Loremaster needs to make die rolls on their behalf (even if this only happens rarely). When this happens, the Loremaster should determine which skills are appropriate to the character, looking at the list of Common skills (or Weapon skill list in case of a fighter).

Skills for Loremaster characters can be made favoured. Whenever a Loremaster character uses a favoured skill the roll receives a free bonus equal the individual's Attribute rating.

Next, the Loremaster assigns a rating to each skill required. To do this, consider if the ability in question can be said to be *directly related* to the main activity of the Loremaster character, *partially related*, or *not related* at all, and then refer to the table opposite.

Skill ratings:

Rating	Description	The ability is...
-	unskilled	Not related to the character's trade.
♦	poor	Partially related to the character's trade.
♦♦	average	
♦♦♦	good	Directly related to the character's trade.
♦♦♦♦	superior	

The Loremaster can adjust the proficiency level of a Loremaster character to better reflect his or her experience level by choosing the higher or the lower rating in a category. Exceptionally proficient characters might be attributed even more superior skill ratings, up to the usual maximum score of 6.

The Loremaster needs to choose the skills possessed by Niping, the young son of a Dwarf trader that the company has encountered in a tavern in Lake-town. The Loremaster needs to assess his proficiency at Courtesy, as the companions have persuaded him to introduce them to Balin son of Fundin, as they don't know him and he would like to be properly introduced. As Niping is a trader, the Loremaster determines that Courtesy is directly related to his activity, and attributes to the Dwarf a good skill a rating of ♦♦♦.

Endurance

The Endurance rating of a Loremaster character is really needed only when an encounter degenerates into an armed confrontation. Loremaster characters involved in combat are treated as adversaries, and are knocked out at the end of a round if they are reduced to zero Endurance, or are killed outright when wounded once. The usual rules for Encumbrance do not apply to Loremaster characters, and they are equipped as the Loremaster sees fit considering their occupation and the circumstances of the encounter.

The Endurance rating of a Loremaster character is found using the table below. Characters that can be described as being fighters by trade (soldiers, warriors, guards, etc.) add their Attribute level to the scores indicated by the table.

Endurance:

Culture	Endurance
Bardings	14
Beornings	16
Dwarves	18
Elves	12
Hobbits	10
Woodmen	12

Part Seven: The Shadow

The
- Shadow -

"I have seen three ages in the West of the world, and many defeats, and many fruitless victories."

Middle-earth has been under attack by the forces of darkness since its creation. Through each age, the world has been threatened by the designs of a Dark Lord, a powerful Enemy relentless in the desire to dominate all. Sauron the Great, an evil spirit of immense power, might already be far closer to victory than any dare dread. The presence of the Enemy weighs upon the hearts of most inhabitants of Middle-earth, with the exception of a fortunate few living in the havens of the north-west. Multitudes living to the east and south worship him as the only god they have ever known.

The Free Peoples of the North are among those few who have cherished a glimmer of hope: the knowledge that, as powerful as he appears to be, Sauron can be resisted and even defeated by steadfast opposition. Countless battles have been won or lost by alliances of the peoples of Middle-earth, and though the Shadow has never failed to return in a new shape, even after the most resounding defeats, neither has hope ever fully deserted the hearts of those who fight against it.

But the Shadow does not solely rely upon instruments of war and the devious deeds of its servants to breed fear and doubt in its enemies. The temptations that dwell even in the hearts of the brave have ever been the ally of the Shadow. Valiant warriors, adventurers and kings can all stray from their path willingly, given the right circumstances. No matter how pure they believe their motives to be, or how just the ends, giving in to their darkest desires will eventually lead them to exert their power for personal gain or the domination of others.

Sources of Corruption

Adventurers accumulate Shadow points to represent the growing burden of grief, doubt, weariness and self-interest that comes to rest on the hearts and minds of those who oppose the Shadow. While much corruption can be attributed to the anguish caused by the Dark Lord's deeds, the Shadow can only work to exaggerate and nurture weaknesses that are already present.

As the Twilight of the Third Age approaches, the sources of corruption multiply and increase in severity. Heroes mainly risk gaining Shadow points in four ways:

- Experiencing distressing events (see Anguish).
- Crossing or dwelling in an area tainted by manifestations of the Shadow (see Blighted Places).
- Committing despicable or dishonourable deeds, regardless of the end they sought to achieve (see Misdeeds).
- Taking possession of a cursed or tainted item or treasure.

Anguish

...suddenly he knew that he was imprisoned, caught hopelessly; he was in a barrow.

Living the life of adventurers in a world where the light is fading, heroes will often be reminded of their own fragility, and that of the world they know and love.

When a character witnesses a distressing event or directly experiences a disturbing situation, he is required to make a Corruption test (see page 145).

The table below provides a number of examples to help the Loremaster decide if a situation requires a Corruption test. The column to the right indicates how many Shadow points a character gains if he fails the test.

Anguish:

Sources of Anguish	Example	Shadow gain
Natural but unexpected tragic event, or very grievous occurrence.	*Serious or mortal accident, death in the family, natural catastrophe.*	The hero gains 1 Shadow point only if he fails the Corruption test AND gets a 👁 result.
Gruesome killing, dreadful experience, Orc-work (senseless destruction), display of the power of the Enemy.	*Awakening in a haunted tomb, discover a traitor among friends, discovering villagers savagely mutilated, seeing the mustering of a Shadow army.*	1 Shadow point
Harrowing experience, physical and spiritual torment, Sorcery.	*Slavery, torture, the Black Breath, haunted by a Wight, seeing the Eye.*	2 Shadow points
Experience directly the power of the Enemy.	*Interrogated by the Eye, captured by the Nazgûl.*	Gain 1 Shadow point regardless of the outcome of the Corruption test. Then, gain two additional points if the test is failed.

Blighted Places

> ***There was no movement of air down under the forest-roof, and it was everlastingly still and dark and stuffy.***

Darkness seems thicker in the lair of a wicked beast, and the air itself hangs gloomily where black treachery was once committed. Grief and suffering never abandon the pits once inhabited by servants of the Dark Lord or the plains where bloody battles were fought.

When a character enters or lingers in an area that has been infused with malice by the darkness and has become blighted, he must make a Corruption test. If the test is failed, the character gains one point of Shadow.

Adventurers will usually only enter a blighted place when they really need to, but they could also stumble inadvertently into one in the course of a journey. The Loremaster can represent this by asking the players to make a Corruption test when travelling through regions where the Shadow falls more strongly. The Blighted Lands table below shows the frequency of tests needed when travelling through a blighted place found in the different types of regions.

It is left to the discretion of the Loremaster to determine whether a place is considered blighted or not. It is possible for an area found within a region classified as Wild, Shadow or even Dark not to require any Corruption tests to traverse. As far as the accumulation of Shadow is concerned, the various region types as classified on the Loremaster's Map (see page 157) serve as guidelines for the Loremaster to decide whether the region currently traversed by company is blighted or not, with Free lands being rarely blighted, and Dark lands being mostly so.

Blighted Lands:

Traversed region	Area is blighted on a 👁	Frequency
Free lands, Border lands	Roll the Feat die once.	Only when required by the current adventure.
Wild lands	Roll the Feat die twice.	Once every week
Shadow lands	Roll the Feat die three times.	Once a day
Dark lands	Roll the Feat die four times.	Twice a day

When is an area blighted?
If the Loremaster isn't sure and needs a hard and fast rule to determine if an area currently traversed by the company is blighted, he can roll the Feat die a number of times as indicated on the table above. If the Feat die produces a 👁 result, the area is blighted, and the company is required to make Corruption tests as per the table above. The Feat die could be rolled additional times if there are other reasons to consider the place to be unwholesome. For example, an area that has been inhabited for centuries by minions of the Dark Lord, or is currently infested by them; the soul of a village has been tainted by a terrible murder or act of treason, or the spirit of a place is being poisoned by dark sorcery, or similar.

Misdeeds

'You can say that I was too strong and took it by force. For I am too strong for you, halfling,' he cried; and suddenly he sprang over the stone and leaped at Frodo.

Even the most virtuous heroes can find themselves in circumstances that tempt them to do something that would call their integrity into question. Such misdeeds can be the result of an accident or misunderstanding, but could also result from the temptation to achieve a noble goal by nefarious means. In a time when the Darkness is growing ever stronger, those who fight it must master and overcome the darker impulses within themselves.

The Loremaster should usually warn the players when they are about to carry out a Misdeed. This can sometimes be a judgement call, but the Misdeed table below can be used as the basis of the Loremaster's decision.

If the Loremaster determines that a misdeed has been committed, the guilty character automatically gains a number of Shadow points (see table below). Characters do not make a Corruption test when committing a misdeed, as they are not being tempted by the Shadow: they are willingly embracing its ways.

It is important to note that merely attempting to do something despicable is a misdeed, regardless of whether the action achieves its intended objective or not. If the action is classed as a Misdeed due to circumstances that the players are unaware of, for example if they ambush someone they completely believe to be guilty of a heinous crime (unprovoked aggression), but who later turns out to be innocent, they should not immediately gain the Shadow points. Instead, their behaviour when the mistake comes to light determines if they take the points or not. If their reaction is one of contrition and an earnest attempt to put the situation right, then the points can be waived at the Loremaster's discretion. This shouldn't be too easy an option, and could result in a side-quest for the characters.

Misdeeds:

Action	Shadow gain
Accidental misdeed	-
Violent threats	1 point
Lying purposefully, subtly manipulate the will of others	2 points
Cowardice, theft and plunder	3 points
Unprovoked aggression, abusing own authority to influence or dominate	4 points
Torment and torture, murder	5 points

Tainted Treasure

There for ages his huge bones could be seen in calm weather amid the ruined piles of the old town. But few dared to cross the cursed spot, and none dared to dive into the shivering water or recover the precious stones that fell from his rotting carcass...

It may not tarnish like silver or rust like iron, but gold can corrupt faster than both, as it is often sought after with a fierce desire. The treasure found within the lair of some dead monster or buried in a long-sealed tomb may be tainted, its sheen able to drive men to distraction and fill their hearts with greed.

Heroes must pass a Corruption test upon finding tainted treasure, or suffer the Shadow point indicated on the table opposite.

Tainted Treasure:

Treasure provenance (examples)	TN	Shadow gain
From the hoard of a Troll	14	1 point
From the hoard of a Dragon	16	1 point
Stolen from an ancient barrow	14	2 points
From a stronghold of the Dark Lord	16	1 automatic point. Then, gain three additional points if the test fails.

Consequences of Corruption

He did not go much further, but sat down on the cold floor and gave himself up to complete miserableness, for a long while.

Adventurers who dare to challenge the encroaching darkness face the risk of being overcome with grief. In gaming terms, a hero must be careful not to accumulate more Shadow points than he is able to get rid of.

When a hero's Shadow point total equals or exceeds his Hope score, he has been made Miserable, as his spirit is weakened by too much grief and sorrow.

Bouts of Madness

...a cold fury rose in him, so that all speech failed him for a while. A fey mood took him.

A Miserable adventurer risks reacting violently to his condition and to start a downward course towards degeneration.

When a character that has been made Miserable by the Shadow gets a on his Feat die, he experiences a bout of madness.

When this happens, the player relinquishes control of his character to the Loremaster for a short period of time. The Loremaster plays out the crisis, making the character do something he will later regret. Here are some examples of the consequences of a bout of madness:

- *Rage* – the character broods over real or imaginary wrongs until he reacts aggressively to a perceived threat or source of opposition.
- *Wretchedness* – the hero descends in a deep state of depression. He cannot propose any task for the length of the crisis.
- *Desperation* – the hero cannot find a trace of hope in his spirit, and thus cannot spend points of Hope until his heart is again lifted.
- *Lust* – the character feels an irresistible desire for an object not belonging to him, and tries to secretly take it.

If at all possible, the Loremaster should ground the consequences of a bout of madness either on the reason required the roll that triggered the crisis, on the character's Shadow weakness, or on one of his negative Traits (see Degeneration below). More often than not, the crisis provokes an aggression of some type, verbal or physical, upon the most likely and available target (a character's Fellowship focus might often qualify). The Loremaster should pick the most appropriate pretext and build the episode upon it.

Usually, a bout of madness is resolved right after the character got the result, but the Loremaster can choose to postpone the reaction, letting the player keep control of his character, only to snatch it from him at a later, more appropriate moment. (the Loremaster might choose to do so especially when the roll that provoked the bout of madness wasn't dramatically relevant).

A Miserable Lifstan has entered a ruined tomb in Mirkwood with Trotter and failed an Awareness test producing an . The young Barding has been feeling uneasy since he descended the rotting steps leading to the underground chambers, and he secretly blames Trotter, his Fellowship focus, for leading him in to such a situation. When a Spider suddenly emerges from the inky

darkness, the Loremaster decides that Lifstan flees the place immediately, leaving Trotter to face the critter alone.

When a bout of madness finally passes, the character regains control of himself and sees his mind finally cleared of the tangle of fear and doubt he fell into before facing the crisis.

In gaming terms, a player who suffered a bout of madness cancels all the Shadow points he accumulated so far, and replaces them with a single 'permanent' Shadow point.

Permanent Shadow points may not be removed, but are considered as normal Shadow points for all purposes.

Players keep track of permanent Shadow points by writing their Shadow score as X/X, where the value after the slash is their permanent Shadow.

Degeneration

In addition to 'resetting' his Shadow score, every time a hero suffers a bout of madness he develops a Flaw, a negative Distinctive Feature. Their calling determines the precise nature of the degeneration, as the trait is taken from a list corresponding to the calling's Shadow weakness:

A Shadow weakness represents an individual's main inner fault; their susceptibility to a certain kind of temptation or behavioural flaw. This vulnerability is exploited by the corrupting power of the Shadow, gradually twisting the hero's behaviour. Each list presents its four Flaws in order of increasing seriousness: the first time a hero fails and is taken by madness he develops the first Flaw in the list, then the second, and so on.

A flawed adventurer has not lost the possibility of being a hero. Many of the characters described in the books display the influence of the Shadow to some measure. In most cases, they were able to keep their weaknesses in check, avoiding corruption's direst consequences.

Invoking Flaws

Using rules similar to those governing the use of Traits, the Loremaster may invoke a character's Flaw whenever it would have a negative effect on the situation at hand.

In other words, it must be reasonably plausible that the character would have fared better if he didn't possess the negative feature depicted by the Flaw.

The Loremaster may invoke a flaw to apply a *Feat Re-roll* or a *Failure Aggravation*. Usually, the Loremaster cannot apply the effects of the same Flaw more than once during the same scene, and certainly not to the same action.

Feat Re-roll

When a player is attempting an action using one of his common skills, he may suffer from a Flaw and produce a poorer result.

If the Loremaster rules that a Flaw is affecting the performance of a hero, the acting player must roll the Feat die twice, and keep the lowest result.

An Arrogant hero is making a Courtesy roll. The Loremaster considers that his pompous conduct may worsen his chances to succeed and so requires that the player rolls the Feat die twice and keep the lowest result.

Degeneration:

Shadow weakness	1	2	3	4
Curse of Vengeance	Spiteful	Brutal	Cruel	Murderous
Dragon-sickness	Grasping	Mistrustful	Deceitful	Thieving
Lure of Power	Resentful	Arrogant	Overconfident	Tyrannical
Lure of Secrets	Haughty	Scornful	Scheming	Treacherous
Wandering-madness	Idle	Forgetful	Uncaring	Cowardly

If a hero was already entitled by a special ability to roll the Feat die twice and keep the best result, then the Flaw neutralises the ability and lets him roll the Feat die just once.

Failure Aggravation
When a hero fails at an action, a Flaw may dramatically worsen its already negative outcome.

If the consequences of a failed roll may be affected by a Flaw possessed by a hero, the Loremaster can severely aggravate the outcome of the action, turning it into a truly catastrophic effort.

A Brutal hero attempts to impress a crowd using Awe. The player fails the roll, and the Loremaster determines that the adventurer actually drew his sword and harmed someone in his overzealous attempt to intimidate.

Other Uses

In addition to the mechanics explained above, and their worth as opportunities for roleplaying, Flaws can be used as triggers for custom-made sources of trouble.

When circumstances can be affected negatively by a hero's Flaw, the Loremaster may weave into the narration an obstacle provoked by the hero himself.

A Mistrustful hero might need to make a test of Insight to avoid reacting with hostility to a stranger, or a plot twist might be triggered by the absent-mindedness of a forgetful adventurer. When the Loremaster is improvising an unforeseen hindrance such as these, they might even briefly take control of the flawed hero, possibly against the will of the controlling player.

Shadow Weaknesses Descriptions

Every time a hero develops a Flaw, he is taking a step towards his complete defeat at the hands of the Shadow. He is renouncing his higher ambitions and embracing simpler, more primitive emotions. He is trading respect for arrogance, love for lust, trust for suspicion.

This section describes each shadow weakness and flaw presented in the game. The Loremaster can use the definitions listed here to determine the effects of a bout of madness, or to decide whether or not a Flaw should affect the behaviour of a hero.

Curse of Vengeance

> **"I wish I had Gandalf here! Curse him for his choice of you! ... As for you, I will throw you to the rocks!" he cried and lifted Bilbo in his arms.**

Individuals who live by the sword are ever tempted to draw it, either literally or figuratively, when their will is thwarted or when they deem their honour to have been impugned by an insult. As corruption spreads in the hero's spirit, his behaviour worsens, leading to more extreme violent reactions.

Spiteful
The hero often repays real or imagined wrongs with vicious rudeness. Depending on the provocation, the hero may be simply very impolite, or downright insulting.

Brutal
A Brutal hero reacts violently to provocations and shows little restraint under most circumstances.

Cruel
A Bruel adventurer doesn't care if his actions cause pain and suffering to others, and is needlessly savage with his enemies.

Murderous
A hero becomes Murderous when he starts to consider killing as a perfectly natural way to achieve a goal or simply to make things go his way.

Dragon-sickness

> ...he fell under the Dragon-sickness, and took most of the gold and fled with it, and died of starvation in the Waste, deserted by his companions.

Adventurers who find themselves on the road to seek lost riches run the risk of catching the age-old disease capable of turning a pile of enchanted gold into bitter ashes. As the Shadow tightens its grip on their hearts, the world shrinks around them and their closely guarded possessions.

Grasping
Grasping describes the desire to accumulate gold and precious items above all else, just for the sake of possessing them.

Mistrustful
When your prized possessions start to weigh you down and become a treasure to be guarded, even the good advice of friends appears to mask dubious intentions.

Deceitful
A Deceitful adventurer feels no shame in misleading others with lies and stratagems, as long as his machinations further his ends and needs.

Thieving
A Thieving adventurer has discovered that anything he desires can be his – he just has to take it. He earned the right to take all he wants when he sacrificed the love of his peers and his own self-respect.

Lure of Power

> "It is by our own folly that the Enemy will defeat us," cried Boromir. "How it angers me! Fool! Obstinate fool! Running wilfully to death and ruining our cause."

When a man is given a position of authority, either by rank, lineage or stature, he may end up mistaking his own wishes for those of the people he should be guiding or keeping safe. Power is the quintessential temptation, and provides the Shadow with an easy way to win the hearts of those who desire it.

Resentful
A Resentful adventurer is often bitter and angry with the people he ought to protect, as he feels that he risks his life for individuals that fail to recognise his actions on their behalf.

Arrogant
An Arrogant hero doesn't miss an opportunity to underline his own importance, often belittling his peers and companions.

Overconfident
Overconfidence denotes overweening pride, a sentiment that blinds a hero to his own limits and weaknesses. He will set out to do anything he sets his mind upon, regardless of the consequences that might befall others.

Tyrannical
A Tyrannical hero escalates his actions and desires to the level of a just cause. His disregard for the lives of others is so profound that he will go to any length to achieve his ends, regardless of the cost or methods employed to accomplish them. Any dissenting opinion is considered as utter betrayal.

Lure of Secrets

> "The roots of those mountains must be roots indeed; there must be great secrets buried there which have not been discovered since the beginning."

Inquisitiveness and curiosity are desirable virtues in an individual, but knowledge can be put to malicious use

and learned individuals can look down on others as ignorant fools. Secrets are dangerous, as the very desire of uncovering them may corrupt the heart.

Haughty

A Haughty character doesn't recognise easily the wisdom found in the words and actions of others, and tends to turn aside all advice and offers of help.

Scornful

A Scornful hero treats the propositions of others with disdain, making use of every opportunity to mock them for their presumed inadequacy.

Scheming

A Scheming adventurer keeps his thoughts and intentions to himself at all times, never giving advice and heeding only his own judgement. He might sometimes agree with the propositions of others, but only to be free to follow his own choices later.

Treacherous

When an adventurer becomes Treacherous he cannot be trusted to keep his word. He is ready to betray his own friends and allies if it would be to his advantage.

Wandering-madness

"I feel I need a holiday, a very long holiday, as I have told you before. Probably a permanent holiday: I don't expect I shall return."

Wandering without ever really settling down might be the destiny of most adventurers, but it carries the risk of never finding something to live for. The road goes ever on and on, it's true, but whither then?

Idle

It takes a lot to stir an Idle adventurer into action. He is easily distracted, and must be cajoled to fully participate in endeavours.

Forgetful

Forgetful indicates that a hero is often daydreaming and absentminded, and finds it difficult to remember even important things.

Uncaring

An Uncaring adventurer is losing touch with the world outside of himself. He can't bring himself to feel compassion and quickly loses interest in matters that do not concern him directly.

Cowardly

A Cowardly hero cares only for his own safety under any circumstances, and will go to any length to save himself when a threat arises.

Succumbing to the Shadow

When a hero has developed the full complement of four Flaws related to his Shadow weakness, he is in risk of totally succumbing to the Shadow.

A hero already displaying four Flaws who suffers yet another bout of madness is hopelessly lost and is taken out of play.

What happens to a character that falls under the Shadow is up to the Loremaster, who might find a way to incorporate the fallen hero's destiny into the plot of the ongoing story. Generally speaking, a character that succumbs is likely to disappear quickly from the game, probably as a consequence of one of the following events:

- *Return to Valinor.* When the burden of the Shadow overpowers an Elf, he will seek to leave Middle-earth as soon as possible, to sail for the Uttermost West and be healed of the sadness and misery of this world.

- *Madness.* When a Man, a Hobbit or a Dwarf falls under the Shadow, he succumbs to madness. More often than not, this will result sooner or later in the death of the hero as the madman kills himself, threatens others to the extent that he must be killed or starves to death in some solitary place, forsaken by men and animals.

- Adversaries -

"Before you could get round Mirkwood in the North you would be right among the slopes of the Grey Mountains, and they are simply stiff with Goblins, Hobgoblins, and Orcs of the worst description."

The Free Folk of the North have long been beset by many enemies. Numerous wars have been fought in the lands between the Misty Mountains and the Running River, and the Free Peoples have celebrated many victories, but to no avail: the shadowy corners of Wilderland hide countless cunning creatures, endlessly scheming for their own dark purposes or waiting for the return of their Master.

This chapter presents a selection of monstrous creatures belonging to the various intelligent and evil races populating Middle-earth.

Creatures Descriptions

All entries in this chapter are divided up by type (Orcs, for example) and sub-type (such as Orcs of the Misty Mountains, Mordor-Orcs). Each grouping then presents the game details for one or more individual creatures (Orc soldier, Orc guard, and so on) to be used as ready-to-play adversaries.

Main Characterstics of Adversaries:

Characteristic	Effect
Attribute Level	Add rating to all rolls using a favoured ability.
Endurance	Creatures are out of combat if reduced to 0 Endurance (or wounded once).
Hate	Creatures at 0 Hate at the start of a round are Weary.
Parry	Used to find the TN to hit the creature.
Armour	Roll to make a Protection test. Add Attribute level if score is underlined.
Skills & Weapon Skills	If ability is underlined add the creature's Attribute level to all rolls.

When making rolls rolls for servants of the Shadow, the meaning of the 👁 and ᚹ icons on the Feat die are inverted.

Presentation Format and Special Rules

To make the life of a Loremaster easier, all game information regarding creatures is presented in an 'information box'. The capabilities of a monster are described using a set of terms and characteristics that are similar to those used to define heroes, but that make use of simplified rules meant to speed up the gameplay.

Die Rolls for Adversaries

When the Loremaster is making a die roll to determine the outcome of an action attempted by a servant of the Shadow, it has been considered more appropriate to the theme to switch the meaning of the two special icons: the [Eye] icon becomes the highest result possible and yields an automatic success, while the ᚹ rune becomes the lowest result possible and produces a value of zero.

Attribute Level

This replaces the three Attributes used to describe player-heroes. It is added as a bonus every time that a creature attempts a roll using a characteristic indicated as favoured (without the need of spending any point to invoke the bonus) and as a Damage bonus to be applied when the creature hits an opponent in combat rolling a great success or twice in the case of an extraordinary success.

Endurance

This value represents the Endurance rating of the creature. Unless a special ability prevents it, a creature is knocked out of combat at the end of a round if it is reduced to zero Endurance, or is killed outright when it is wounded once. The usual rules for Encumbrance do not apply to creatures, and neither can they opt to be knocked back to reduce the severity of a loss of Endurance.

Hate

The Loremaster uses a creature's Hate points rating to gauge its resolve and to fuel its special abilities. If a creature begins a round without Hate points, it is considered to be Weary.

Parry

A creature's Parry rating is used to calculate the TN to hit the creature in combat.

Armour

A creature's armour rating works the same as a hero's – it is used to make a Protection test when the creature is hit by a Piercing blow. If its rating is underlined, the creature adds its Attribute level to all Protection rolls.

Skills

The skills possessed by a creature are represented by six collective skill group ratings. Whenever a roll requires a skill, the Loremaster rolls a number of Success dice equal to the rating possessed in the corresponding skill group. If a skill group name is underlined to mark it as favoured, the Loremaster adds the Attribute level of the creature to the roll.

Weapon Skills

These are a creature's means of attack. Weapon skill descriptions always correspond to a weapon or attack type featured in the creature's weapon table.

Common Weapons

This entry lists the characteristics of the weapons or attack types commonly employed by the creatures.

Special Rules

Called Shots

The rules for triggering a called shot work differently for creatures confronting a company of heroes.

A creature automatically attempts a called shot using the weapon it is currently wielding as its next action whenever the companion attacking it fails his attack roll and obtains a result on his Feat die.

The effects of a successful called shot attempted by a creature are given under the Common weapons entry.

Special Abilities

Most creatures display an array of special abilities, representing their innate powers, behavioural oddities or unique characteristics. These special abilities are mostly triggered by the Loremaster and often reduce the creature's Hate point score, but they may also describe a negative characteristic, which could hamper the creature's performance under certain conditions. The Loremaster is entitled to make use of a special ability even when it requires the expenditure of the last Hate point possessed by the creature. Unless otherwise noted, a creature may use a special ability in addition to attacking, so long as they have the necessary Hate to spend.

Bewilder

...still the great bats swirled about the heads and ears of elves and men...

Reduce the creature's Hate point score by 1 to reduce the Parry rating of a hero to the basic combat TN of their chosen stance.

Commanding Voice

...amid the clamour a deep voice was raised in command.

Reduce the creature's Hate point score by 1 to restore 1 Hate point to all creatures of the same kind involved in the confrontation (not including the creature using the special ability).

Craven

The Orc fell with cloven head. His followers fled howling...

If at the beginning of a round the creature is found without Hate points, it tries to flee the battlefield.

Denizen of the Dark

"There's only one thing those maggots can do: they can see like gimlets in the dark."

While the creature is in the dark (at night, underground, or in a dense forest) its Attribute level is doubled as far as all rolls are concerned (attack and Protection tests included).

Dreadful Spells

...it seemed that they could almost hear words, cool words, saying something about water and sleep. They gave themselves up to the spell and fell fast asleep...

Reduce the creature's Hate point score by 1 to force one companion to make a Corruption test. If he fails it, he gains a Shadow point and suffers the effects of the creature-specific spell (as detailed in the creature's description.

Fear of Fire

Wolves are afraid of fire at all times...

The creature loses 1 point of Hate at the end of the first round of combat fought against a direct adversary wielding a torch or other sort of burning item.

Fell Speed

...the bat-cloud came, flying lower, over the shoulder of the Mountain...

Creatures capable of flight or possessing a great agility can choose which heroes to engage at the beginning of every turn (even when in inferior numbers), can attack heroes in any stance, and can choose to abandon combat at the beginning of any round.

Foul Reek

...the worm-stench was heavy in the place, and the taste of vapour was on his tongue.

An overpowering stench forces any hero engaged with the monster to spend a point of Hope to attempt any action other than an attack (including combat tasks).

Great Leap

The wolf snarled and sprang towards them with a great leap.

Reduce the creature's Hate point score by 1 to attack any one companion, in any combat stance including Rearward. This replaces their normal attack.

Great Size

There in the shadows on a large flat stone sat a tremendous goblin with a huge head...

The creature is so resilient and tough that it is not knocked out or killed when reduced to 0 Endurance or if wounded once. The creature instead becomes Weary but keeps fighting at 0 Endurance or when wounded once, until wounded twice, or reduced to 0 Endurance AND wounded.

Hatred (subject)

...the hatred of their race for the dwarves had been rekindled to fury.

When the creature is confronted by the object of its hate, all its Weapon skills and Attack forms are considered to be favoured.

Hate Sunlight

They were flagging in the rays of the bright sun, winter sun shining in a pale cool sky though it was...

The creature loses 1 point of Hate at the end of the first round of combat fought while exposed to the light of the sun.

Hideous Toughness

A hail of dark arrows leaped up and snapped and rattled on his scales...

Reduce the creature's Hate point score by 1 to reduce the Endurance loss caused by an enemy's attack by a number of points equal to the creature's Attribute Level.

Horrible Strength

The strength in his long arms and shoulders was terrifying.

Following a successful attack, reduce the creature's Hate point score by 1 to increase the target's Endurance loss by a number of points equal to the creature's Attribute Level.

No Quarter

...these fell creatures would bite the throats of those that they threw down.

If the creature has just knocked out a character, reduce its Hate point score by one point to immediately roll a second attack on the same target using the creature's secondary

weapon (against the usual TN): if the roll succeeds with a great or extraordinary success, the target is considered to have been administered a coup de grâce and is killed (regardless of damage inflicted).

Savage Assault

Like a storm they broke upon the line of the men...

If the creature's main form of attack has just hit producing a great or extraordinary success, reduce its Hate point score by 1 point to immediately roll a second attack on the same target using the creature's secondary weapon.

Seize Victim

Frodo felt something seize him by the ankle, and he fell with a cry.

If the creature's main form of attack has hit, the creature may hold on to the target to reduce the mobility of the victim: a seized victim cannot change stance, and sees its Parry rating reduced to half (rounding fractions up).

A hero may free himself by forfeiting his attack and rolling **Athletics** against a TN equal to 10, plus the Attribute level of the seizing creature.

The seizing creature cannot attack with its main weapon as long as it is seizing the target (but can freely use a secondary attack if it possesses one).

Snake-like Speed

Diving under Aragorn's blow with the speed of a striking snake he charged into the Company...

When a hero has rolled for an attack against the creature, reduce its Hate point score by 1 to double the creature's basic Parry score (not including the bonus due to a shield). If the TN to hit the creature is now higher than the roll, the attack missed.

Strike Fear

All of a sudden they heard a howl away down hill, a long shuddering howl.

Reduce the creature's Hate point score by 1 to force all companions to make a Fear test (against TN 14, unless a different difficulty is included in brackets in the ability description).

Thick Hide

...his sword rang, glanced aside, and fell from his shaken hand.

When the creature succeeds in a Protection test against a close-combat weapon, obtaining a great or extraordinary success, the attacker drops his weapon (under normal circumstances, the dropped weapon may be recovered spending an entire action).

Thing of Terror

...he saw suddenly, issuing from a black hole of shadow under the cliff, the most loathly shape that he had ever beheld, horrible beyond the horror of an evil dream.

A hero facing such a terrifying creature must make a Fear test at the beginning of every round of combat, until he fails or he succeeds with a great or extraordinary success (the test is made against TN 14, unless a different difficulty is included in brackets in the ability description).

- ORCS -

Bred by the first Dark Power in the early years of the world to serve him in many wars, Orcs are an evil race of intelligent creatures. Their malicious spirit is full of hatred for all living things including their own kind, and when left to their own devices they often end up quarrelling fiercely over futile questions. They are usually strong and agile, quick and robust, and ready to learn or devise new methods or instruments of torment. Their appearance and size differs from tribe to tribe, but many prominent features are common to all Orcs, such as swarthy skin, short legs and broad, slanted eyes, wide mouths and long fangs.

Common Weapons

Orcs may be equipped with the following weapons.

Orcish Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot	Notes
Bent sword	4	10	12	disarm	*A one-handed weapon with a crooked and blackened blade, it is favoured by most breeds of Orcs as it is a nasty weapon in the hands of a crafty fighter.*
Bow of horn	4	10	12	poison	*A small but powerful bow made of wood, horn and metal, it is hard to bend by an archer lacking the terrifying strength of the long arms of Orcs.*
Broad-bladed sword	5	10	14	poison	*This wicked short sword forged by Orcs is primarily a stabbing weapon, created to viciously strike unprotected areas.*
Broad-headed spear	5	10	12	Pierce	*A short spear wielded with one hand mainly as a thrusting weapon, but used also to slash with sweeping swings. It is not balanced and thus cannot be shot from a distance.*
Jagged knife	3		14	-	-
Heavy scimitar (2h)	7	10	14	break shield	*A larger scimitar meant to be borne with two hands, it is a brutal, heavy blade, meant to literally hack enemies to pieces.*
Orc-axe	5		16	Break shield	*Cruel weapons of differing size and shape, the axes wielded by Orcs are used one-handed to savagely hack at armoured enemies and to cleave through their shields.*
Spear	4	9	12	Pierce	-

Called Shot Effects:

Weapon Type	Successful Called Shot
Break shield	The target's shield has been smashed.
Poison	The target has been Poisoned.*
Disarm	The target drops his weapon.
Pierce	The attack results in a Piercing blow, regardless of the Feat die.

**Orc-poison:* A Poisoned character becomes partially blind after a number of rounds equal to his Body or Heart rating, whichever is higher, in addition to suffering from the normal effects of being Poisoned (see page 130).

A blinded character in combat must assume a defensive stance and suffers a modifier of +6 to the TN of all actions. The effects of Orc-poison wear off after one full day.

Great Orcs

'...he was a great Orc with a huge iron-clad head, and yet agile and strong.'

Great Orcs are a powerful breed of Orc often encountered as leaders and chieftains of their weaker-blooded relatives. Legends hint at the possibility that they descend from servant spirits that once took an Orcish shape to serve the Dark Power's purposes. King Golfimbul, the Great Goblin, Azog and his son Bolg were Great Orcs.

Great Orc:

Attribute Level	
7	
Endurance	**Hate**
48	8
Parry	**Armour**
5 +2 (shield)	4d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 2
Perception, 3	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Heavy scimitar (2h)	3
Broad-headed spear	3
Orc-axe	2
Special Abilities	
Horrible Strength	Hideous Toughness
Commanding voice	Great size

Mordor-Orcs

"The Orcs in the service of Barad-dûr use the sign of the Red Eye."

Several different breeds of Orc comprise the growing armies in the service of Mordor, from the small but deft Snaga to the large Black Uruk. Broad, with crooked legs and long arms, Mordor-Orcs differ greatly in size and capabilities but are all cruel and cunning, often directly subject to the will of their Dark Lord. In the years following the Battle of Five Armies, Orcs bearing the Red Eye have started once again to issue from Mordor, agents spreading the taint of the Shadow and bearing orders for all malevolent creatures with hate for the Free Peoples.

Messenger of Lugbúrz:

An emissary of the Shadow, a Messenger of Lugbúrz is always on an errand for his Master, be it to spy upon Men, Elves or Dwarves, or to rouse all creatures with evil intent in an area.

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
18	5
Parry	Armour
4	2d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 2
Perception, 3	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Heavy scimitar (2h)	2
Jagged knife	3
Special Abilities	
Hate Sunlight	Snake-like speed
Commanding Voice	

Snaga Tracker:

A smaller breed gifted with wide, snuffling nostrils, able to catch the scent of enemies from a distance, even after a prolonged period of time has passed. Trackers are a weak and lazy lot, but quick and clever.

Attribute Level	
2	
Endurance	Hate
8	2
Parry	Armour
3	2d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 1
Perception, 3	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Bow of horn	2
Jagged knife	2
Special Abilities	
Hate Sunlight	Snake-like speed

Black Uruk:

Large and evil Orcs of great strength, picked from among the fiercest to act as lieutenants, bodyguards or chosen warriors, sent to reinforce a colony of lesser Orcs.

Attribute Level	
5	
Endurance	Hate
20	4
Parry	Armour
5 +2 (shield)	2d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 3	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Broad-bladed sword	2
Broad-headed spear	2
Special Abilities	
Horrible Strength	

Orcs of the Misty Mountains

... near the Gladden Fields he was waylaid by the Orcs of the Mountains, and almost all his folk were slain.

Among the most numerous of the malicious creatures serving the Shadow, the Orcs of the Misty Mountains are used to living and making war in the deep places beneath the earth, where their sight is keener than any other Orc. When they are encountered in their mines, they are savage fighters and reckless in assault, but they leave the dark under the mountains only when marching to war or to avenge their fallen kind, as they suffer badly the light of the sun.

The Orcs of the Misty Mountains are a wild and independent lot, bent on their own purposes and aims when the Shadow's influence is weak, but ready to obey the will of their Master when directly subject to it. The smallest among them are often referred to as Goblins.

Orcs of Goblin-town

The Orcs and Goblins of Goblin-town hate Dwarves, and will attack a company that includes Dwarves with blind fury:

Add Hatred (Dwarves).

Orcs of Mount Gram

The Orcs of Mount Gram fiercely hate all Hobbits, and will relentlessly attack a company including any:

Add Hatred (Hobbits).

Orc-Chieftain:

Only the most wicked and cruel of Orcs live long enough to become chieftains and lead their tribe or warband to battle. An Orc-chieftain is easy to recognise, as it is usually the largest in a group, wielding the meanest weapons and donning superior armour. Often, tell-tale scars or mutilations mark a chieftain's long service under the Shadow.

Attribute Level	
5	
Endurance	Hate
20	5
Parry	Armour
4 +3 (great shield)	3d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Orc-axe	3
Spear	2
Special Abilities	
Hate Sunlight	Horrible Strength
Snake-like speed	Commanding voice

Orc Soldier:

Often armed with characteristic bent swords, Orc Soldiers are a loud, undisciplined lot. Only a forceful chieftain with a cruel whip and a sharp blade can keep them in line...

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	**Hate**
12	1
Parry	**Armour**
3 +1 (buckler)	3d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 1
Perception, 3	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Bent sword	2
Spear	2
Special Abilities	
Hate Sunlight	Craven

Goblin Archer:

A Goblin Archer is an Orc chosen for his keen eyes. His ability to see in the dark, coupled with a steady hand, lets him shoot arrows with precision by night or day.

Attribute Level	
2	
Endurance	**Hate**
8	1
Parry	**Armour**
2	2d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Bow of horn	2
Jagged knife	1
Special Abilities	
Hate Sunlight	Denizen of the Dark
Craven	

Orc Guard:

The strongest and boldest Orcs are equipped with the toughest armour they can find or put together, and are placed to keep watch on an area wielding a sword and sturdy shield.

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	**Hate**
16	3
Parry	**Armour**
4 +2 (shield)	2d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 2
Perception, 3	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Spear	3
Bent sword	2
Special Abilities	
Hate Sunlight	Hideous Toughness

- Spiders - of Mirkwood

These foul things belong to a very ancient race, almost as ancient as Darkness itself. Evil, intelligent creatures in spider-form, they weave hideous webs whose black threads hang across the trees of Mirkwood, waiting for any living being to be hopelessly trapped in them. The dense cobwebs seem to snare light itself, plunging their surroundings into perpetual night and earning the forest its name.

For almost two thousand years, the Spiders of Mirkwood have spied upon all who dared approach the forest, watching and waiting. They have plagued the Woodmen living along the western eaves of the wood and the Elves of Thranduil's Palace with furtive assaults and ceaseless warfare. Unlike Orcs, they are not direct servants of the Shadow, but their own machinations often find them in league with it.

Common Weapons

The Spiders of Mirkwood's poison is their most formidable threat:

Spider Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Ensnare*	-	-	-	-
Sting	Attribute Level	10	14	Poison
Notes				
Ensnare: *The creature uses its thread to capture its target, using the Seize Victim power*				
Sting: *Unlike the natural breeds of spiders, these creatures inject their poison using a sting.*				

Called Shot Effects:

Weapon Type	Successful Called Shot
Poison	The target has been Poisoned.*

**Spider-poison:* A Poisoned character is falls to the ground paralysed after a number of rounds equal to his Body or Heart rating, whichever is higher, in addition to suffering from the normal effects of being Poisoned (see page 130). The effects of Spider-poison wear off after one full day.

Attercops

> **...there were spiders huge and horrible sitting in the branches above him.**

Many-eyed and many-legged, Attercops are giant spiders reaching up to the size of boars. They are crafty predators who attack unwary victims, first tying them up with their spider-thread and then poisoning them. While a single Attercop does not pose a significant threat to any but a less-experienced adventurer, a roused spider-colony can be a challenge even for a veteran company of heroes.

Attercop:

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	Hate
12	2
Parry	Armour
4	2d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 1
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 1	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Ensnare	2
Sting	2
Special Abilities	
Great Leap	Seize Victim

Great Spider:

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
36	3
Parry	Armour
5	3d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 2
Perception, 2	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Ensnare	3
Sting	2
Special Abilities	
Denizen of the Dark	Seize Victim
Strike Fear (TN 16)	Dreadful Spells*

**Holding Spell:* a hero who fails the Corruption check due to Dreadful Spells cannot attack a Great Spider for a number of rounds equal to 10 minus his Wisdom rating.

Great Spiders

...he noticed a place of dense black shadow ahead of him, black even for that forest, like a patch of midnight that had never been cleared away.

Great Spiders display their dreadful heritage much more prominently than the lesser Attercops. They are gigantic in size, sometimes as big as horses or greater, but their soft, flexible bodies enable them to hide in surprisingly narrow passages. While they can always be described as monstrous spider creatures, their features often differ from one individual to another: the number and appearance of their legs and eyes may vary, for instance – some are supported by long and thin stalks, others move about on strong and hairy limbs ending in claw-like appendages, some spy from the dark with clustered eyes, and others follow their prey with bulbous, many-windowed eyes. Regardless of the details, Great Spiders are always a terrifying sight.

- Trolls -

Trolls are one of the evil races created by the Great Enemy in the Elder Days. They were bred to fight in many bitter wars, and were created strong and powerful, yet slow-witted and dull, and appear monstrous and misshapen, as if left unfinished by their cruel maker. It is not known whether they were generated in many forms, or if they evolved since their first appearance, but by the end of the Third Age several different breeds of Trolls can be encountered.

Common Weapons

The following weapons are those most commonly employed by most trolls.

Troll Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	5	👁	14	-
Club	6	10	14	-
Crush	Attribute level	👁	12	-
Heavy hammer	8	👁	14	Break shield

Notes

Bite: *Trolls have fearsome fangs, sometimes so large that they protrude from their mouths.*

Club: *A Troll club can be anything, from a stout branch ripped from a tree, to a body part torn from a fallen enemy.*

Crush: *Weaponless Trolls use their weight and strength to pound relentlessly upon their enemies.*

Heavy hammer: *Trolls clutch this huge, brutal weapon with a single hand.*

Called Shot Effects:

Weapon Type	Successful Called Shot
Break shield	The shield carried by the target has been smashed.

Cave-Trolls

A huge arm and shoulder, with a dark skin of greenish scales, was thrust through the widening gap.

Cave-Trolls were created to fight and hunt deep under the earth. Barely more intelligent than wild beasts, they have dark skin with a greenish hue, covered with tight, robust scales. While not necessarily inferior in size to other breeds of Trolls, they appear shorter as they are extremely hunched and often advance on all fours walking on their knuckles.

Nobody knows if Cave-Trolls can endure the light of the sun, as they never leave their hunting grounds under mountains, hills and fells.

Cave-Troll:

Attribute Level	
7	
Endurance	**Hate**
76	8
Parry	**Armour**
5	3d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 0
Perception, 1	Vocation, 0
Weapon Skills	
Bite	3
Crush	1
Special Abilities	
Great Size	Hideous Toughness
Savage Assault	Thick Hide

Hill-Troll:

Attribute Level	
7	
Endurance	**Hate**
84	7
Parry	**Armour**
5 (+1)	3d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 0
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Heavy hammer	3
Crush	2
Special Abilities	
Great Size	Hideous Toughness
Strike Fear	

Hill-Trolls

Taller and broader than Men they were, and they were clad only in close-fitting mesh of horny scales, or maybe that was their hideous hide...

Hill-Trolls are probably the most common breed of this cruel race, as they prowl desolate areas from the Coldfells in the north to Gorgoroth in the south. They are wild and beastly in battle, prone to bellowing and roaring to intimidate their enemies, but can be disciplined to use simple weapons and armour.

Hill-Troll Chief:

A Troll-chief is a larger, meaner and more intelligent Hill-Troll, a formidable opponent even for the most valorous (or reckless) heroes.

Attribute Level	
8	
Endurance	**Hate**
90	10
Parry	**Armour**
6 (+1)	4d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Heavy hammer	4
Bite	2
Special Abilities	
Great Size	Hideous Toughness
Horrible Strength	No Quarter

Mountain-Trolls

Great beasts drew it, Orcs surrounded it, and behind walked mountain-trolls to wield it.

Mountain-Trolls are the largest of all Troll-races, often twelve feet or more in height. Immensely strong and dangerous, luckily they are rarely encountered, and are dull-witted and slow.

Mountain-Troll:

Attribute Level	
9	
Endurance	Hate
96	9
Parry	Armour
7	4d
Skills	
Personality, 4	Survival, 3
Movement, 2	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Crush	4
Special Abilities	
Great Size	Hideous Toughness
Horrible Strength	Thing of Terror

Stone-Trolls

...there were three fair-sized trolls at hand in a nasty mood, quite likely to try toasted dwarf, or even pony, for a change...

Stone-Trolls are solitary predators, living in small groups in filthy caves strewn with the remains of unwary travellers. They seem to be more intelligent than other Troll types, maybe thanks to their habit of prowling in the proximity of populated areas. Their appearance, while always frightful, is made less monstrous by their tendency to wear simple clothes, cook their food and use tools like drinking jugs and barrels. A very ancient breed, Stone-Trolls owe their name to the fact that they turn to stone if exposed to the light of the Sun.

Stone-Troll:

Attribute Level	
6	
Endurance	Hate
72	5
Parry	Armour
5	3d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 1
Movement, 2	Custom, 1
Perception, 1	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Club	3
Crush	1
Special Abilities	
Great Size	Horrible Strength
Hatred (Dwarves)	

- Wolves - of the Wild

By the time of Bilbo's adventures, Wolves, Wargs and Werewolves could be encountered at night in the eastern vales close to the Misty Mountains, where they prowl in search of prey. The Wargs and Orcs of the Mountains often help one another in their raids against the Woodmen, gathering food for the Wolves and slaves to work for the Orcs.

Common Weapons

Wolves attack their enemies using the following form of attacks:

Wolvish Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	Attribute level	10	14	Pierce
Rend	Attribute level	👁	14	-

Notes
Bite: *Wolves possess powerful jaws filled with sharp fangs.*
Rend: *When an enemy is most vulnerable, Wolves rend their bodies using their hideous claws.*

Called Shot Effects:

Weapon Type	Successful Called Shot
Pierce	The attack results in a Piercing blow, regardless of the outcome of the Feat die.

Wargs

"How the wind howls! " he cried. "It is howling with wolf-voices. The Wargs have come west of the Mountains! "

Wargs are a particularly evil breed of Wolves living over the Edge of the Wild, displaying wicked cunning and malicious intent. They communicate using a dreadful language, foul to the ears of listeners not sharing their love for cruel and hateful deeds. Wargs generally look like lean and powerfully-built grey wolves, with eyes shining in the dark, but their size and appearance vary according to age and experience.

Wild Wolf:

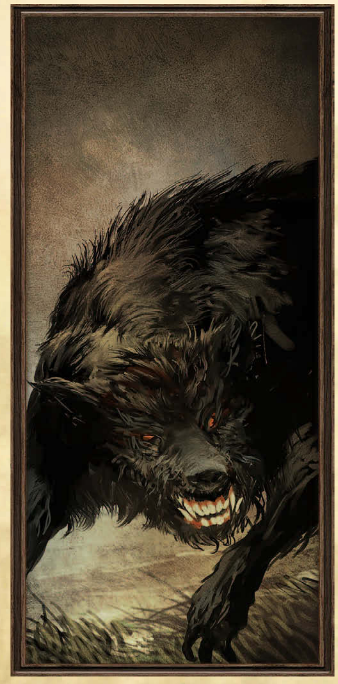
The average Warg, a Wild Wolf is slightly larger than an ordinary Wolf, and much more vicious. It can be encountered in packs, but also as a solitary hunter or scout, ready to howl and alert other Wargs and evil creatures for miles around. Orcs learn how to ride upon Wild Wolves like men do on horses.

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	**Hate**
12	1
Parry	**Armour**
5	2d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 0
Perception, 2	Vocation, 0
Weapon Skills	
Bite	2
Special Abilities	
Fear of Fire	Great Leap
Seize Victim	

Wolf Leader:

Greater in stature, cruelty and cunning than ordinary Wargs, a Wolf-leader is called upon by its lesser kin to deal with serious threats, like bands of travelling adventurers trespassing into Warg territory. A Wolf-leader is never encountered alone, but always surrounded by a pack of Wild Wolves.

Attribute Level	
5	
Endurance	**Hate**
16	3
Parry	**Armour**
6	3d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 3
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Bite	3
Rend	1
Special Abilities	
Fear of Fire	Strike Fear
Savage Assault	



Werewolves

"Listen, Hound of Sauron! " he cried. "Gandalf is here. Fly, if you value your foul skin! I will shrivel you from tail to snout, if you come within this ring."

It is suspected by the most learned among the Wise that the cruelest packs of Wargs might be led by the foulest of creatures: trusted servants of the Dark Lord returned from the Ancient World to serve him once again. Devouring spirits trapped in wolf-form, they hate the very soil they walk upon, and desire only to defile and ruin in an attempt to quench the dreadful hunger that consumes their mortal bodies.

The Werewolf of Mirkwood:

The Werewolf of Mirkwood is a monstrous wolf-like creature. Greater than any Wolf or Warg, its body has been twisted by the terrible power that has possessed it for uncounted centuries. This dreadful beast has made its lair under the mountains of the Wild Wood, a complex of caves it leaves only to temporarily satisfy its thirst.

Attribute Level	
8	
Endurance	**Hate**
68	12
Parry	**Armour**
9	4d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 3
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 3	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Bite	4
Rend	1
Special Abilities	
Thing of Terror (TN 16)	Savage Assault
Denizen of the Dark	Great Size
Great Leap	

Hound of Sauron:

Chosen for its ferocity and malicious intelligence, a Hound of Sauron is a minion of the Dark Lord, a servant sent on a precise errand, be it the gathering of forces for a coming war, the hunt for a specific individual, or spying on an area. Hidden behind the shape of an ordinary Warg, a Hound of Sauron conceals much greater powers.

Attribute Level	
6	
Endurance	**Hate**
20	5
Parry	**Armour**
6	3d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 3	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Bite	3
Rend	1
Special Abilities	
Strike Fear	Hideous Toughness
Savage Assault	

- Vampires -

In the Elder Days, the Dark Lord counted among his servants a number of mysterious bat-like creatures, sometimes said to possess the power to change shape. A race of vampire-bats endures to this day: when roused, they fly in huge swarms, heralding the coming of an Orc-host by forming a dark cloud above its ranks. But a darker menace lurks among the heights of the Mountains of Mirkwood and in forgotten pits under Dol Guldur, a brooding presence that accompanied the Shadow when it first descended upon Greenwood the Great...

Common Weapons

Vampires attack using a formidable array of natural weaponry.

Vampiric Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	Attribute level	👁	16	Pierce
Rake	Attribute level	👁	14	-

Notes

Bite: *The fangs of a vampire penetrate deeply when the creature fastens on its victim.*

Rake: *Vampires may use their wings to strike with talons as hard as iron.*

Called Shot Effects:

Weapon Type	Successful Called Shot
Pierce	The attack results in a Piercing blow, regardless of the outcome of the Feat die.

Great Bats

...the great bats ... fastened vampire-like on the stricken.

Unusually large bats, whose taste for blood often leads them to follow when Orcs and Wargs go on raids or to war.

Great Bat:

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	Hate
10	2
Parry	Armour
5	2d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 3
Movement, 3	Custom, 0
Perception, 3	Vocation, 0
Weapon Skills	
Bite	2
Special Abilities	
Hate Sunlight	Denizen of the Dark
Seize Victim	Fell Speed
Bewilder	

Secret Shadows

Taking the form of great misshapen bats, these servants of Sauron fly on their great fingered wings to carry his dark tidings or to spy upon the land, or join a swarm of Great Bats when war or hunt has provided them with prey. These Vampires belong to an astute and patient breed, always aware of the will of their Master and ready to do his bidding. Ages ago they were able to disguise their foul appearance and appear as beautiful women. Today, they may appear as such only briefly, to confound their opponents.

Secret Shadow:

Attribute Level	
5	
Endurance	Hate
35	6
Parry	Armour
7	3d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 3
Movement, 3	Custom, 2
Perception, 3	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Bite	3
Rake	2
Special Abilities	
Hate Sunlight	Denizen of the Dark
Snake-like Speed	Fell Speed
Savage Assault	Bewilder

- Part Eight: The Campaign -

The
- Setting -

... suddenly his hand met what felt like a tiny ring of cold metal lying on the floor of the tunnel.

Several important events occur in the year 2941 that usher Wilderland into a new age: the death of Smaug, the Battle of Five Armies, the restoration of the Kingdom under the Mountain and of Dale, and the discovery of the Ruling Ring by Bilbo Baggins. The decade following these momentous events sees the Free Peoples savour an unexpected respite: men gather under the banners of ambitious kings and chieftains, raising their heads to look beyond their old and restrictive borders for the first time in a long while, and adventurers dare once again to follow forgotten roads in search of renown.

From a gaming perspective, this is a very suitable time to set up a new campaign in Wilderland. It is a period that is well known to readers, but its chronology is missing the detail of later times, allowing for all sorts of adventures. ***The One Ring*** 'officially' starts in the year 2946. By this time, the heroes have adjusted to the new *status quo* and have five years of active adventuring in front of them before the year 2951 offers the Loremaster the opportunity to close the first part of a campaign with a bang as the Shadow returns to Mirkwood. This rude awakening shatters the peaceful optimism of recent years, a dramatic event that proves particularly effective if the early years have been spent playing simpler adventures.

Introduction

This chapter contains the background material needed to start playing a game set at the end of the Third Age. The information is supposed to be used more as a toolkit rather than as a rigid script – the last thing it should do is limit the creativity of the Loremaster and his players. By introducing the locations, personalities and events presented here, Loremasters and players will be able to set up a great number of Adventuring and Fellowship phases that will be both entertaining and faithful to the source material.

The aim of the material found in this chapter is to establish the foundations of an ongoing series of adventures based initially around a focused location (for example, the cities of Esgaroth and Dale) and eventually ranging across Wilderland, an area full of opportunities for exploration and excitement. The period of relative peace offers the Loremaster a chance to present adventures rich with wonder and discovery, set in a simpler narrative style, well-suited to the mood of the tale narrated in *The Hobbit*.

The Tale of Years

The chronologies found in this volume record events from the past and provide an outline of things yet to come. Most entries are drawn directly from the available sources; others have been developed for the game, striving to attain a certain level of internal consistency. The result is a timeline composed of events great and small, giving a historical context to the deeds of the heroes. Combining the happenings described here with their own adventures will help the players achieve a deep level of participation in the setting. Moreover, the presented events serve as plot elements that may be developed into complete adventures.

Wilderland

Wilderland is a wide region. Leagues and leagues of unexplored terrain lay in front of heroes in search of adventure, and well-known and beloved locales await players eager to discover them once again from a new personal perspective. The detailed journey rules further enhance the experience that comes from simply travelling across the region.

Important Personalities

Many important characters are referred to in this chapter, and most of them may be introduced freely into the lives of player-heroes. These canonical personalities embody the true spirit of the setting, and should always be included as an active part of the game. For many players, making the acquaintance of some of the characters of the books is the main reason to play a game set in Middle-earth.

Using the Sources

The background material found in this chapter has been written to be as complete as possible, but of course the best reference material is Tolkien's books themselves. A Loremaster in need of inspiration or a player looking for the most faithful description of a place can simply crack their books open and look for the relevant chapters; although spirited discussions of the 'correct' interpretation of a particular passage should be kept for after the game!

As far as the core set of *The One Ring* is concerned, *The Hobbit* is the book to keep handy, but several pages in *The Lord of the Rings* concern themselves with what happened before Frodo's time. However, this doesn't mean that every time that a character encounters someone or visits a place the Loremaster should search through hundreds of pages for the tiniest bit of reference material.

Assembling a Company

The composition of the group of characters is very important, as no other gaming element has a comparable influence on the type of campaign that will take shape during play. Assembling the right group of adventurers is therefore a step that should be considered with the greatest care. To facilitate this decision, this chapter offers a standard solution, one that should easily accommodate the choices made by the players during character creation:

The default campaign starts in 2946, on the occasion of the first Gathering of Five Armies, a celebration held in Dale for the first time, five years after the eponymous battle.

Newly created heroes may be adventurers that have been attracted to Lake-town by the clamour surrounding the event. They may have ended up there on their own, or they might have accompanied an official emissary. If the Loremaster wants the campaign to feature characters as personalities of importance, the adventurers might even be those emissaries themselves! Whatever the details, the Gathering of Five Armies provides a quick and easily customisable option.

The Tale of Years

Three timelines have been included in this section: the first (Old Lore) presents facts mainly concerning the ancient history of relevant areas of Middle-earth and the folks inhabiting it; the second (Recent Past) offers information that is considered common knowledge to most starting adventurers; the third chronology (Gathering Shadows) outlines current and possible future developments that can be witnessed or affected by the heroes themselves.

Old Lore

"Long ago in my grandfather Thrór's time our family was driven out of the far North..."

The information presented in most entries below may be revealed to a character belonging to the folk most concerned with the information and possessing the Old lore Trait, or succeeding in a **Lore** roll. Entries in italics are reserved for the Loremaster's eyes, as they relate facts known only to a few (if anyone at all).

Year 1050

About this time, a shadow takes shape in Greenwood the Great. The forest is darkened and Orcs and Spiders begin to spread from the Naked Hill in the south. The Silvan Elves confine themselves to the northernmost regions of the forest, and Men begin to call it Mirkwood. The earliest tales of the Hobbits relating to their Wandering Days seem to indicate that they once came from these areas.

Year 1980

The Dwarves of the line of Durin delve too deep under the Misty Mountains and awaken an ancient evil. After millennia of prosperity, the vast halls of Khazad-dûm, Wonder of the Northern world, are abandoned the following year, its inhabitants driven out by fear and death.

Year 1999

Thráin I, King of Durin's folk and distant ancestor of Thorin Oakenshield, comes to the Lonely Mountain and founds a dwarf-kingdom. There, the Dwarves discover their most prized treasure, the Arkenstone, known also as the Heart of the Mountain.

Year 2063

In the past centuries, the increase in power of the Necromancer of Dol Guldur has been responsible for the slow but steady diminishing of the inhabitants of the vales of the Great River. In the year 2063, the Wizard Gandalf finally enters the fortress to investigate the matter (songs and legends of the Woodmen have him led through Mirkwood by the young son of a hunter).

The evil power dwelling in Dol Guldur retreats when faced by Gandalf's challenge and flies to the East. The Wizard returns from the pits of the fortress carrying a treasure, and gives it to the Woodmen for safekeeping (see Woodmen-town on page 268). It begins the period known to the Wise as the Watchful Peace, a truce that will last for four hundred years.

The shadow over Mirkwood weakens and many folks that were forced to leave return to their lands: the Woodmen multiply and prosper in the following years, establishing settlements both east and west of the Great River.

Year 2210

Thorin I, son of Thráin, removes the royal house of Durin's folk from Erebor to abide in the Grey Mountains. He carries the Arkenstone with him, as part of the royal treasure.

Year 2460

After four centuries of hiding, the Dark Lord secretly returns to Dol Guldur. His strength is increased, and his dark thoughts are felt by all malevolent creatures. The Ring heeds the call.

Mirkwood darkens once again as evil things are called back and creep into the forest. In the following decades, many people choose to leave the region and go south.

Year 2463

At the request of the Lady Galadriel, a White Council of the Wise and Powerful is formed to unite the forces of the West against the Shadow. Saruman the White, who has long studied the Enemy and his servants, is chosen to lead it. The Elvenking of Northern Mirkwood is invited to join, but refuses.

It is around this year that Déagol, a Stoor Hobbit, finds the One Ring while swimming in the Gladden River. It does not remain in his property for long, as his friend Sméagol murders him to get it for himself. In the following years Sméagol is estranged from his people, and eventually seeks refuge under the Misty Mountains.

Year 2480

Answering commands issued from their master in Dol Guldur, the Orcs begin to spread in the dark places beneath the Misty Mountains. From Mount Gundabad in the north to Moria in the south they secretly strengthen every stronghold, barring all the passes into the lands west of the mountains.

To respond to the increasing threat from the mountains, the Woodmen of the western river vales raise their burg at Mountain Hall, building upon the foundations of an older fortification.

Year 2510

Following a great battle, Eorl the Young, lord of the Horse-folk of the north, leads his people from the upper vales of the river Anduin to live as free Men in the plains of Calenardhon, far in the distant south. He becomes the first King of the Mark of the Riders.

Year 2570

Late in the reign of Náin II, a plague of Dragons begins to afflict the Dwarven mansions in the Grey Mountains. The Dwarves face a long and terrible war.

Year 2589

The Dragons of the northern waste spread south to prey on the Dwarves. King Dáin I and his second son Frór are slain by a Cold-drake while barring the gates to their halls.

Year 2590

Thrór, the eldest son of Dáin I and heir to the kingship, restores the royal house to its ancient seat in Erebor. The Arkenstone is brought back to its place in the Great Hall of Thráin, and with it returns a great part of Durin's folk. They mine and tunnel the roots of the Mountain, enlarging the subterranean kingdom building huge halls and greater workshops. Another group of Dwarves is led eastward by his brother Grór, the third son of Dáin: under his rule they eventually settle in the Iron Hills.

About this time, several clans of Northmen living along the River Running move north to be closer to the Lonely Mountain. They befriend the Dwarven colony of Erebor, attracted by the opportunities offered by the prospering trade with the Iron Hills. The city of Dale prospers, and the following hundred years see it become the capital of a strong kingdom extending far and wide to the East and South.

Year 2740

Dismayed by the increasing forces of both Dwarves and Men of the North, many Orcs resort to raiding the regions west of the Misty Mountains. This threat comes mainly from their stronghold of Mount Gram.

Year 2747

At the Battle of Greenfields, Hobbits of the Shire face and defeat an Orc-band from Mount Gram. Their king, the Orc Golfimbul, is killed by Bandobras Took, better known as the "Bullroarer".

Year 2758

About this time, the wild folks of the East move against their enemies. In the North, the armies of Dale muster under the banner of King Bladorthin, but between the end of 2758 and the first months of 2759, stiff, relentless winds hit the North, covering the lands with snow and ice. The Long Winter has come, and King Bladorthin dies before he sees the end of it. He is succeeded by his young

son Girion, who drives his enemies back to the eastern frontiers of the realm.

In five months, the Long Winter causes great suffering and inflicts grievous losses on many peoples. Gandalf the Grey himself intervenes, coming to the aid of the Shire-folk.

Year 2770

One night, Smaug the Dragon descends on the Lonely Mountain spouting flames. The Dwarves are caught by surprise and Erebor is sacked, its inhabitants slain. Warriors from Dale are destroyed too, and Girion their lord is killed. Thrór, the King under the Mountain, escapes the slaughter by secret means with his son Thráin. They are joined in exile by Thorin, the young son of Thráin. The Dragon claims the underground halls of Erebor as his lair, and its treasure becomes his hoard. From the Mountain, Smaug starts preying upon the neighbouring lands, killing people and livestock and reducing the surrounding area to a wasteland. Some time later, Dale becomes deserted and slowly crumbles to ruins.

Year 2790

Thrór, Dwarven King in exile, is captured and slain in Moria by the Great Orc Azog. Preparing a war of vengeance, his son Thráin calls for a great muster of Dwarves.

Year 2793

The Dwarves of Durin's Folk, strengthened by great forces sent from the Houses of the other Fathers of the Dwarves, begin a long and cruel war against the Orcs of the Misty Mountains.

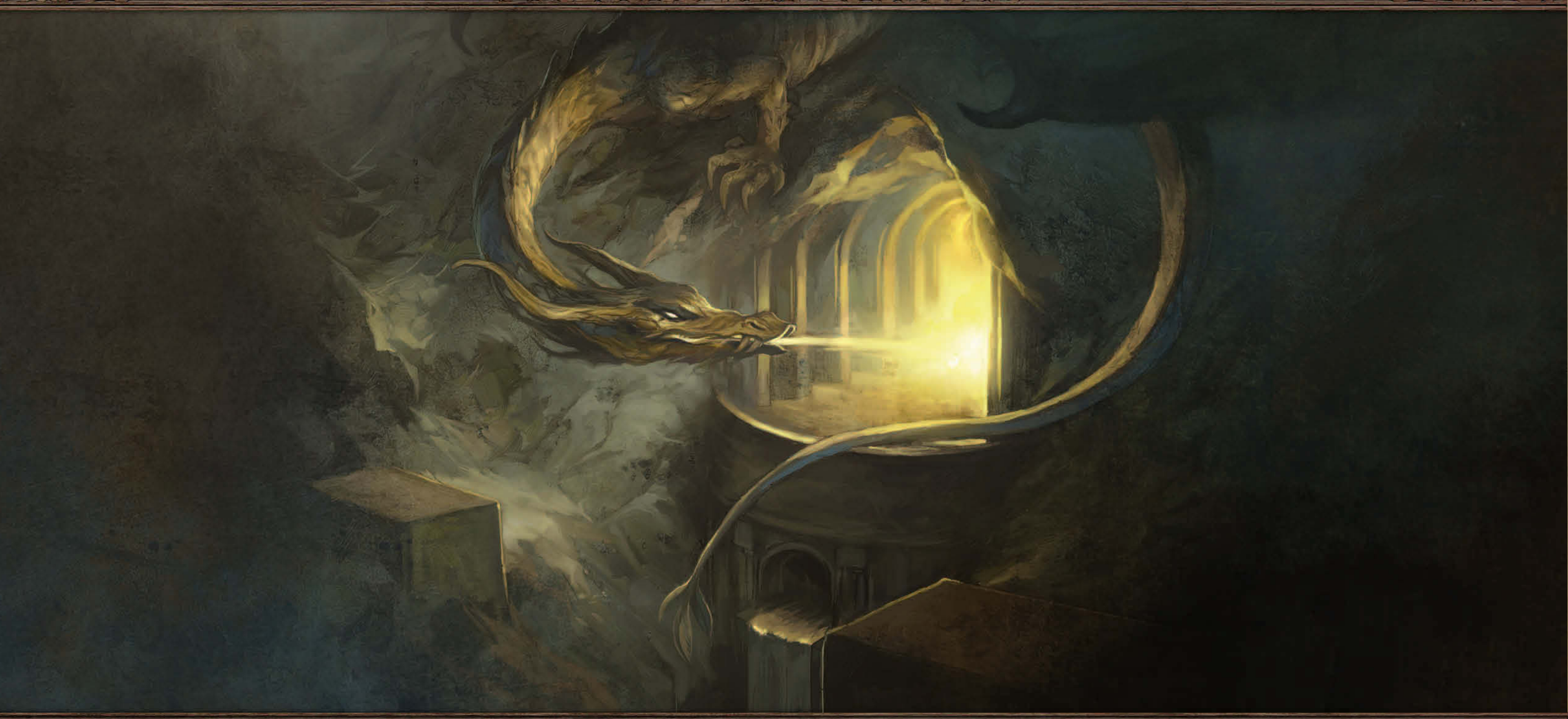
Year 2799

The final battle of the War of the Dwarves and Orcs is fought before the East-gate of Moria. The Dwarves are victorious, and a very young Dáin Ironfoot distinguishes himself by killing Azog singlehandedly. But victory has a bitter taste: the war has greatly reduced the number of Orcs still dwelling in the mountains, but at the cost of a frightful number of lives.

After the battle, the various Houses part ways without attempting to reclaim Moria, and the Dwarves are dispersed again to the four winds: Dáin Ironfoot returns to the Iron Hills. Thráin and his son Thorin wander westwards, to eventually settle in the Blue Mountains to the northwest.

Year 2841

A lust for gold slowly takes possession of Thráin. He resolves to return to Erebor and convinces Balin and Dwalin and a few others to leave the Blue Mountains



with him. Their wanderings bring them again beyond the Misty Mountains, until on a dark night Thráin disappears in Mirkwood.

Year 2850

After almost eight hundred years, Gandalf the Grey once again enters Dol Guldur in secrecy. Inside the evil fortress, he finds his darkest fears to be true: the dreaded Necromancer is indeed the dark lord Sauron. Before fleeing the black stronghold, the Wizard encounters the missing Heir of Durin: a dying Thráin entrusts him with a map and a key and then dies.

Year 2851

The White Council meets in Rivendell to confer about Gandalf the Grey's discoveries in Dol Guldur. He urges a move against the dark lord, proposing an attack on his fortress. Saruman opposes Gandalf's advice, asserting that the Council is not yet ready and that for the moment Dol Guldur should not be molested for fear of worse repercussions (at this time, Saruman has already discovered that the One Ring was lost in the Gladden Fields, and does not want any interference in his attempts to find it).

Year 2890

Bilbo Baggins of Bag End is born in the Shire, son of Bungo Baggins and Belladonna Took.

Year 2900

Despite the danger of these lands, many bold men and women make their way back into the vales of the Great River from the South. They are welcomed by Radagast the Brown to 'live in amongst the more pleasant woods in the valleys and along the river-shores'.

Year 2911

An extremely fierce and long cold season begins in November. Remembered as the Fell Winter, its frozen grip doesn't release the regions of the North from snow and ice for five months. Rivers and lakes are frozen over, and white wolves descend from the frozen wastes of the far North.

When the frigid winds finally relent in March of the following year, rivers overflow with the melting of the snow and many lands are flooded as a result. It is about this time that the Long Marshes spread extensively, extending from the Old Forest road to the Forest River.

Year 2931

Aragorn, son of Arathorn, is born on March 1st. He is the direct descendant of Isildur, the last High King of the Men of the West. Two years later, his father is killed while riding against the Orcs of Mount Gram with the sons of Elrond Halfelven. His mother Gilraen takes Aragorn to Rivendell, where he is received by Elrond as foster-son. He is given the name Estel (Hope) and his lineage concealed.

Recent Past

> **... there came one day to Bilbo's door the great Wizard, Gandalf the Grey, and thirteen Dwarves with him...**

The following entries report the relevant events that have occurred in the past five years. Entries not in italics are to be considered common knowledge for any character coming from the North, as this great news has spread far and wide in Wilderland.

Year 2941

The Wizard Gandalf, Thorin Oakenshield and thirteen Dwarven companions visit Bilbo the Hobbit in the Shire: they set upon a quest to recover the treasure of Durin's Folk and free the North from the threat of the Dragon of Erebor.

Gandalf temporarily abandons the expedition to persuade the White Council to strike decisively against Dol Guldur: this time, Saruman approves and the council sets upon the difficult task. But Sauron yet again anticipates the moves of his enemies and retreats from his fastness: the Dark Power leaves Mirkwood.

A series of unlikely events lead to the death of Smaug and to the destruction of Lake-town. Dáin of the Iron Hills becomes King of the restored Kingdom under the Mountain, while Dwarves, Men and Elves collaborate in rebuilding new cities in Dale and upon the Long Lake.

Year 2942
Bilbo returns to his peaceful life in the Shire. He carries the One Ring with him, not suspecting its true nature. News of the great events that have come to pass spread across the land as he travels home.

The Dark Lord returns to Mordor. He is received by his most powerful servants, the nine Ringwraiths, who prepared for his return in their stronghold of Minas Morgul.

Year 2943
The Master of Lake-town falls victim of the Dragon-sickness and leaves, carrying with him most of the gold given to him by Bard for the help of the Lake-people. Initially helped by some companions, he is then abandoned and dies of starvation in the Waste.

Year 2944
The creature Gollum leaves his lair under the Mountains and begins his search for the thief of the Ring. Some time later, he enters Mirkwood, to eventually reach Esgaroth and even the streets of Dale. For a while he is watched closely by the Wood-elves.

Years 2944-2945
Bard completes the reconstruction of Dale and is crowned King. A new Lake-town is completed on the Long Lake and trade resumes up and down the Running River. Beorn establishes his rule as a great chief at the head of his new followers, soon to be known as the Beornings.

Gathering Shadows

One autumn evening some years afterwards, Bilbo was sitting in his study writing his memoirs...

The following entries describe events concerning Wilderland from year 2945 to 2951. Here no entries are given in *italics*, as all featured events are available for the Loremaster to use in any ways he sees fit. For example, each entry could be expanded to constitute the main plot of an Adventuring phase, or narrated to players as part of the Year's End segment of a Fellowship phase, or simply employed as a descriptive background element. Some information won't be revealed to players at all, but kept secret until the day it will become known (if it will be discovered at all).

There are no major events recorded in the sources for the first four years, and so a handful of simple ones have been devised for the game (mainly to facilitate the introduction of a new group of heroes). Without earth-shattering occurrences, new characters have plenty of room to develop their adventuring careers before more important occurrences start affecting their lives: in year 2951, the

first seeds of the War of the Ring are planted, and a new era for Middle-earth begins.

Year 2946

The Gathering of Five Armies

In the last days of November, on the fifth anniversary of the eponymous battle, a great feast celebrating the victory at the Battle of Five Armies is held in Dale for the first time. People from all neighbouring lands are expected to participate in the revels, as the feast has been arranged to coincide with local celebrations held for the end of the harvest season and the beginning of the colder months of the year.

The celebrations are a great occasion to put together a group of new heroes.

The Council of the North

During the first Gathering, envoys from Lake-town, the Woodland Realm and the Kingdom under the Mountain meet in the presence of King Bard to debate matters concerning Wilderland.

The player-heroes may be present as representatives of their own folk, and maybe even meet each other at the Gathering.

Year 2947

Gollum seeks the One Ring

About this time, Gollum abandons the trail of Bilbo over the Misty Mountains and turns back. He hides in Mirkwood, slowly making his way to the South. His presence fills the forest with dreadful rumours, and among the Woodmen a tale starts to spread, telling of a blood-drinking ghost preying upon the unwary.

Heroes journeying through Mirkwood or spending a Fellowship phase in proximity to the forest might see a glimpse of Gollum.

Year 2948

The Grey Pilgrim

Fearing a possible estrangement between the Folks of the North, Gandalf the Grey visits the courts of Elves, Men and Dwarves. He is considering the possibility of inviting one of their rulers to become a member of the White Council. The choice will be offered either to King Dáin, the Elvenking, King Bard or Beorn. Gandalf will consider his choices, and then present his candidate to the head of the council, the Wizard Saruman.

If the heroes are in a position to be considered as counsellors, Gandalf listens to their advice.

Year 2949

Gandalf and Balin visit Bilbo

Gandalf and Balin journey to the Shire to visit Bilbo Baggins. They arrive at Bag End on one autumn evening. They spend some time together, talking of their adventuring times and about how things are going in Wilderland.

Balin doesn't hide his disquiet from his good friend, and tries to convince Bilbo to join him in a new adventure. Bilbo is reluctant, and in the end declines the invitation.

If a hero hails from the Shire, he might actually witness the episode.

Year 2951

Sauron Declares in Mordor

After nine years of preparations, Sauron unveils his presence in the black land of Mordor. He is ready to spread his power far and wide, and begins to rebuild his Dark Tower. His will is bent on gathering a vast army in the black land, and his summons are answered by all sorts of wicked creatures. Gollum is among them, and his path slowly turns in the direction of Mordor.

At this time, characters with at least a permanent Shadow point or a Shadow rating of 3 or more may experience nightmares, mostly visions of the black land, the raising of the Dark Tower, or the Flaming Eye.

The Nazgûl enter Dol Guldur

As his first act of war, Sauron sends the Nazgûl to reclaim his stronghold in southern Mirkwood. Their arrival triggers once again the Darkening of Mirkwood. Rumours of a new Shadow in the South start to be whispered by many folks in the North. Orcs and Goblins are found bearing the symbol of a lidless Eye.

The Return of Arwen

Arwen, daughter of Elrond, returns to Rivendell to visit her father after a long stay in Lórien.

The Departure of Aragorn

On the day of his coming of age (March 1st) Aragorn learns about his true name and heritage from Elrond, his foster-father. From his hands he receives two heirlooms of his House: the shards of the sword Narsil and the ring of Barahir. The next day, Aragorn encounters Arwen for the first time and falls in love with her. Upon learning of her true nature and heritage, Aragorn leaves Rivendell to go into the wild.

Wilderland

> **...what I have heard seems to me for the most part old wives' tales, such as we tell to our children. All that lies north of Rohan is now to us so far away that fancy can wander freely there.**

The Adventurer's Map of Wilderland (see page 18) shows the regions found to the east of the Misty Mountains, as far as the river Redwater. It's an area measuring approximately 600 miles across from west to east and 500 miles from north to south. Most of it is occupied by the forest of Mirkwood, and the peoples inhabiting it claim the lands around it or very close to it, if not inside it.

This section contains several entries detailing various features shown on the Loremaster's Map (see page 157). The cities of Dale and Esgaroth are described in greater detail, as they are likely to be chosen as the base of operation for a newly-formed company of adventurers.

Wilderland is covered in much greater depth and detail in the *Heart of the Wild* supplement.

The Lands about the Mountain

Some of the most powerful realms of the Northlands can be found in the vicinity of the isolated peak known as the Lonely Mountain.

Dale

Dale is a city of Men built on the western bank of the Running River. It rises in a valley between the southern arms of the Lonely Mountain, where the river turns around the town making a wide loop before resuming its southward course. Its foundations were first laid by Northmen almost four hundred years ago.

For two centuries, the city enjoyed a close alliance with the Dwarves of the Kingdom under the Mountain and grew rich and prosperous, extending its power to the east over the lands between the Running River and Redwater. Many kings passed down their crown to their heirs, until the city was destroyed when Smaug descended on the Dwarf-kingdom. Dale remained a deserted ruin for the best part of two centuries, its power a dream remembered only in

sad songs sung in Lake-town and in smaller settlements scattered along the Running River.

Dale was reclaimed in the year 2941 by Bard, a descendant of its former lords and slayer of the Dragon, when news of his great deed attracted many Men from the west and south. With the re-founding of the Kingdom under the Mountain the city is returning to its former splendour as the products of skilled Dwarven hands issues again from the Front Gate of Erebor to be sold in the markets of Dale, along with the wares made by local craftsmen and the foreign goods brought upstream by boats coming from Lake-town.

The last four years have seen the completion of most of the restoration works, including crenellated walls and bell towers, but great labours are undertaken every month as trading blooms and wealth increases. Dwarf stonemasons are seen working everywhere, as they supervise the building of new fountains and pools and the raising of new bridges stretching across the waterways.

Dwarf craftsmen busy themselves with the paving of the streets using stones of different colours (from which the streets take their names). The countryside to the south and west of the Mountain is once again home to vast farmlands providing food for the city population and,

especially, for the Dwarf colony under Erebor. Farmers are enlarging their fields every year, getting nearer and nearer to the great forest of Mirkwood and the northernmost extensions of the Long Marshes.

Royal Palace

The residence of King Bard is a stone palace built by Dwarven masons directed by King Dáin himself. From the outside it is an imposing sight, with its marble pillars and commemorative fountain representing the Fall of Smaug. Inside, the palace looks like a Dwarven underground hall, with its small deep windows and glass lamps hanging from the distant ceiling. The two great openings at the side of the great front gate are oriented to receive the light of the sun as soon as it rises over the easternmost Mountain arm.

The throne of King Bard sits upon a dais and is a gift from the Elvenking: made of carven wood, its knotted engravings tell the story of the shooting of the Black Arrow. Here, King Bard holds his court; he receives envoys and important traders from the south and east and dispenses justice upon his vassals and followers when required or asked.

Toy-market

Open every first Monday and Thursday each month in the city marketplace, the toy-market of Dale is a colourful and noisy centre of activity attracting merchants from Wilderland and beyond. Here, Dwarf master artisans compete to sell the product of their craft, beautiful toys made of wood and metal with near-magical properties: life-like singing birds, Dwarven masks that laugh when a string is pulled, and smoking-pipes that produce soap-bubbles are just some examples of the wide offering to be found at the market.

The best-selling item since the reopening of the market is certainly the Dalian musical cracker, finely embossed with entwining dragons, that when pulled apart makes a sharp noise and reveals a small but perfectly functioning musical instrument inside. A separate area is dedicated to the dangerous art of making fireworks; here, interested parties can buy squibs, crackers, backarappers, sparklers, torches, dwarf-candles, elf-fountains, goblin-barkers and thunder-claps.

Merchants Quarter

This is the fastest-growing area of the city, already occupying a sizable part of the town and with several large buildings used to store the wares destined to be shipped to Lake-town. It rises close to the main opening to the south of the city, the Traders Gate, leading to the landings and quays along the river where the goods are loaded onto the boats going downstream, and to the Merchants Way, the southbound road to Esgaroth.

Ravensgate District

Along the north-western bend of the river, closest to the Mountain, stand many large houses, the homes of loyal followers who were richly rewarded by Bard the Bowman for their part in the Battle of Five Armies, and of those merchants and artisans who have grown wealthy through trade. The district is bordered by a long street lined with narrow houses and paved with white cobblestones, the White Lane, where most of the craftsmen workshops of the town are found.

Royal Barracks

The best fighters among the followers of King Bard come regularly to the Royal Barracks to train the youth of the city and help restore the fame of the warriors of Dale. The black-liveried Royal Archers practice here every day, looking for the next occasion to match their skill against the members of the Bowmen's Guild of Esgaroth.

Erebor

The Lonely Mountain has been known as the lair of Smaug the Dragon for almost two centuries. Today, Erebor is again the seat of the King under the Mountain and the most prosperous colony of Durin's Folk. It is an isolated peak, rising to the east of Mirkwood and south of its greater neighbours, the Grey Mountains. The Mountain is tall enough to be covered in snow until spring is underway, and extends over a wide area. Its slopes separate in six great spurs, long steep-sided ridges that fall towards the plains to the south and west, and in the direction of the Waste and its tumbled lands to the north and east.

The waters of the River Running spring from the roots of the Mountain, where the two southernmost spurs of the peak meet in a great cliff-wall. Here, the stream flows

swiftly out of the Front Gate of the Dwarven stronghold and then winds a wide loop over the valley of Dale, before finally turning away from the Mountain on its road to the Long Lake.

Since the death of the Dragon, the followers of King Dáin have been busy cleansing all the passages of their underground kingdom, to free them from the stench of the worm that permeated every corner. Then, they started delving ever deeper, to carve halls and streets under the earth befitting a rich and powerful kingdom. In just a handful of years they have restored all the upper levels of their stronghold, and reopened many lower passages and tunnels that the Dragon blocked to defend his hoard.

The Front Gate

The main entrance to the Kingdom under the Mountain is a tall arch opening on the south face of Erebor. Splintered and blackened in many places at the time of the Dragon, several sections of the arch have been replaced, along with those stones paving the way leading into the Mountain that were rubbed smooth by the passing of the great monster.

The materials used to restore the Front Gate have all been supplied in an unusual way: right after his crowning, King Dáin ordered that every Dwarf leaving the Kingdom under the Mountain on business should return within a year bringing marble suitable for building, as a tribute to their newfound realm. Dáin himself gave his contribution, supplying a large block of red porphyry brought from his home in the Iron hills that was cut and placed as the gate's new lintel. Now that the order of the King has been lifted, entering the Front Gate bringing a small piece of marble as a gift is considered a token of respect.

The Great Chamber of Thrór

A visitor who enters the Front Gate to reach for Erebor's hall of feasting and of council must follow the narrow channel that contains the boiling waters of the Running River. Recovered from its ruin and silence, the great hall is more magnificent than ever before, and its high roof echoes once again with song, cheer, and the speeches of the King under the Mountain. King Dáin's seat dominates the hall, set against the great golden cup of Thrór, a huge two-handed chalice, hammered and carven with birds and flowers with bejewelled eyes and petals.

The Great Hall of Thráin

Down many long stairs and echoing passages, and more long stairs and sloping corridors, a vast chamber is found. Here, for two centuries Smaug the Dragon has lain on his bed of gold, among the remains of many slain Dwarves. But before that time, this chamber was the Great Hall of Thráin, a place of feasting and celebration, where the Arkenstone, the Heart of the Mountain, was kept safe. Today, the gold has been moved elsewhere and the hall has been cleansed, but it will take many long years for it to be considered fully wholesome again: for too long the Dragon has brooded here over his treasure, sleeping his dark dreams. King Dáin comes here from time to time, on his way to the tomb of Thorin Oakenshield.

Balin and several of the Dwarves that took part in the quest that finally freed Erebor seem to have chosen the hall as their meeting place when they must discuss something privately — "A dark place for dark business," as they like to say.

Lake-town

Since the great days of old, when a powerful realm of Northmen stretched far from the Lonely Mountain, there has been a city upon the Long Lake. Grown out of a small community born along its western shore, the village of Esgaroth became a trading port when families of merchants decided to move there from Dale. They built warehouses, and great residences to live in and closely follow the coming and going of their goods. For many years thereafter the boats of the Lake-men were seen going up and down the river, their holds filled with gold and their decks crowded with warriors in armour, ready to bring war to distant lands. When Smaug descended on Erebor almost two hundred years ago, the town of Esgaroth was miraculously spared. Dale wasn't so fortunate, and those inhabitants who were able to escape its ruin with their lives were forced to seek asylum among the Lake-men. But in time, even the town along the shore had to be abandoned for fear of the Dragon, and the Lake-men built new dwellings directly on the surface of the Long

Lake itself, in the hope that its deep, cold waters might keep them safe from the fire. Lake-town was born, and it endured under the shadow of the Mountain until the night Smaug fell upon it, and it disappeared in a cloud of steam and sparks.

Today, a great wooden bridge runs out from the western shore to reach the city of Esgaroth, built anew a few miles to the north of the spot where the bones of Smaug rest undisturbed. Larger than before, the new home of the Lake-people is also constructed upon stilts made of huge forest trees driven into the bottom of the lake, and its buildings, quays and streets bustle with the activities of a folk enjoying a greater level of prosperity than ever before.

Skilful Elves from the kingdom of Thranduil have helped in the reconstruction, and their cunning art is visible in the many arches that bend as gracefully as tree boughs across the wider streets, and in the delicate frets that grace several house facades.

To this day Esgaroth remains a free city, governed by a Master elected from among the old and wise. He conducts the affairs of his office from a Great House in the main Market-place, on behalf of the people of Lake-town and advised by an assembly of councillors. His duty is to safeguard and preserve the peace and riches of the city, administering its trades and policies. In recent years Esgaroth has started to suffer from the proximity of the city of Dale: fearing for the independence of Lake-town, the Master of Esgaroth is tightening his trading and political relations with the Woodland Realm.

The Wood-elves have always been welcome in Lake-town, and much sought-after help arrived from them when the city was destroyed by Smaug. Elves have never stopped being an everyday sight for the Lake-men, both along the quays and in the houses of the most fashionable and influential merchant families.

Market-place
In the tradition of the previous Lake-town, the market-place is actually a wide square gap between the buildings where the surface of the lake is directly accessible by long wooden quays with many steps and ladders. The area is surrounded by the tall piles on which are built inns, taverns and several large warehouses. In this area, many Raft-elves and more exotic merchants coming from lands to the south and east can be encountered.

Town-hall
The new Lake-town differs from the previous one mainly due to the magnificence of its Great House. Raised away from the Market-place (as tradition would have had it) it is removed from the nearby buildings by a stout palisade and is accessed through a portal that can be blocked by an iron gate when needed. Here the Master of Esgaroth meets the city councillors to discuss the town's policies on river-tolls, cargoes and gold. A flight of steps to the back of the hall reaches down to the surface of the lake, where the Master's great gilded boat is always ready to carry him about his business.

Bowmen's Guild-hall
One of the better known sights in Esgaroth is the large fortification rising to the right of the long bridge connecting the city to the mainland. This square building houses the Bowmen's Guild of the city of Esgaroth. Composed of free men, in time of war and danger they gather in companies and come to the support of the city guards. In time of peace, they enjoy the company of their peers and spend their free time at the guild-hall testing their skill with archery challenges and drinking an ale they brew themselves.

The Land of the Beornings

The borders of the land falling under Beorn's rule are defined by how far his followers are willing to go to pursue their enemies. To this day, this includes territories around both sides of the Great River near the Carrock. Since the day that Beorn decided to become a leader of men, his followers have come to live close to his house, building homesteads and small fortified settlements along the edge of Mirkwood, from the Old Forest Road up to the Forest Gate.

Beorn's House

Beyond a belt of ancient oaks and a very tall thorn-hedge, the House of Beorn encloses a wide area including gardens, wooden barns, stables and sheds, and a great house not very different from a traditional Northmen hall

(see the box about the *Northmen Great House* below); rows of bell-shaped bee-hives show that Beorn's eating habits haven't changed since Bilbo's visit (even if it is plain that he doesn't enforce them on his followers, who live mostly by hunting). It is here that Beorn can be found most of the times (at least during the day), holding council with the older and mightier among his followers, receiving foreigners and guests or baking his famous cakes.

The Carrock

The Carrock is a great hill of stone breaking the current of the river in the upper reaches of Anduin, to the north of the Old Ford. An ancient flight of steps starting from a small cave at the foot of the hill leads to a flat space on top. A stony ford joins the Carrock to the eastern shore of the Great River, but not to its western shore.

High Pass

A pass going over the Misty Mountains, connecting Wilderland to the western lands. The High Pass is known to most people as it is often a preferred route to the Redhorn Gate and the pass going over the mountains at the source of the Gladden River. Watching over the pass to free it from the threat of Goblins is one of the duties that Beorn requires from his folk, an obligation that the Beornings are glad to fulfil.

Old Ford

The Old Ford is the point where the Old Forest Road crosses the Great River. Once, a great stone bridge stood here, and the ruins of its foundations can still be seen in the drier season when the river is shallower. The ford is watched constantly by the Beornings, who also meet here to trade with other folks (mainly the Woodmen).

The Land of the Woodmen

The valleys along both sides of the Great River and the western eaves of Mirkwood are the home of the Woodmen. Numerous, brave and well-armed, they populate a land that is constantly imperilled by many threats.

The Woodmen of Wilderland are not united under a crown, but are divided into several Houses, as they call a group of clans or families who dwell together in the same great hall under a common token of kinship. Every house is ruled by its council of Elders, a circle of the old and wise. In times of need, the Elders from all houses meet at a folk-moot, a great gathering where the most important decisions concerning the Woodmen at large are taken. There are four main Houses of Woodmen in Wilderland: the House of Mountain Hall, the House of Woodland Hall, the House of Woodmen-town and the House of Rhosgobel.

Northmen Great House

A great house's main feature is usually a long pillared hall with three aisles, tables, benches and three central wide hearths, the side aisles complete with raised platforms to house sleeping cots and personal wares. Openings on the ceiling let out the smoke produced by the fire-places. Two doors open on the shortest sides, usually placed to face north and south. At one end of the hall, usually near the north door, is a dais with a table placed across its width; the greatest of the hearths is usually placed in front of this table. This is the place where celebrations and feasts are held, and where songs are sung and tidings are heard, or where the Elders of the folk meet to hear each other's council. Woven cloths or painted shields with images of ancient tales or family devices hang from pillar to pillar, with the most magnificent ones placed around the dais. Woodcarvings grace the doorposts, and the base and capitals of each pillar, with animal frets and other decorations.

Mountain Hall

This is the main settlement of the Woodmen on the west side of the Great River. It is hidden in a narrow valley east of the Misty Mountains, where a turbulent stream runs amid steep walls of rock and around grassy knolls and pine-covered hills. The village itself is located where the river loops around an area of grassland set against the stony shoulder of the mountains. It is not protected by a stockade or hedge, as the watercourse has been widened and deepened, making the village accessible only by a dirt road cut along the stream where it passes the nearest to the rock face.

Many villagers work in mines dug into the mountains to the west, searching in the recesses of the earth for metals prized by all inhabitants of the vales of the Great River: copper, tin and iron. It is a dangerous trade, as many creatures lurk in the dark under the mountains, waiting patiently for the unwary.

The Burg

From the village, a flight of stairs reaches up to the burg, a stone tower built centuries ago by the Northmen who first discovered this remote dale. A watch is set upon it by night and day, ready to blast the great Horn of Warning in case Orcs or other foes would try to approach the village stealthily. The horn is one of the treasures of Mountain Hall, as it was carved out of the tusk of a Cold-drake of the North by craftsmen of old, and wrought with many devices, the burg amidst them all.

Rhosgobel

Rhosgobel is the name of the place where the abode of Radagast is found, on the southwestern edge of Mirkwood just one hundred miles north of the naked hill where Dol Guldur rises. Its name ("Brown hay") comes from the high thorn-hedge that separates the area from the nearby forest. The Brown Wizard has been living here since before the Northmen came to the vales of Anduin. His presence has been greatly beneficial to the Woodmen, and over time a small village has sprung up; here the Woodmen dwell under one roof, the long House of the folk, as is their custom.

The Great Hall

This great building has its back to the wood and its face to the Great River, with two doors opening to the north and south. Radagast comes here often, although he usually prefers to reside in his own house some distance to the south of the great hall, a small cottage with a thatched roof inhabited by all sorts of birds.

Woodland Hall

Woodland Hall lies fifty miles to the south of the Old Forest Road, in a wide clearing cut in the forest by generations of axe-wielding Woodmen. It is the largest community of Men to be encountered within the borders of the wild wood, a village protected by a very tall hedge and a stout stockade, raised beside a river flowing south from the Mountains of Mirkwood.

Woodmen of all ages search for fish among the eddies of the Dusky River with bow, spear, net or line, as its waters are still considered wholesome this far from the foulest depths of the forest. They also wash the gravel of its shallows looking for gold, brought here by the waters of the river from the roots of the mountains to the north. The great house of Woodland Hall is a very large building, built on a hillock whose sides have laboriously been made sheer on all sides but one, increasing its defensibility.

The Great Hall

Among the great houses of the woodland folk this is probably the most magnificent. Generations of carpenters spent long hours with knife and gouge in hand to carve life-like images of beasts, warriors and women into the tough wood of the trees of Mirkwood. Every door and window-post, every pillar, rafter and beam tells a different tale, sometimes harkening back to times now forgotten, when the Woodmen lived in different lands. Such craft has never been equalled again, leaving the Woodmen of today to wonder at the cunning of their forefathers.

Woodmen-town

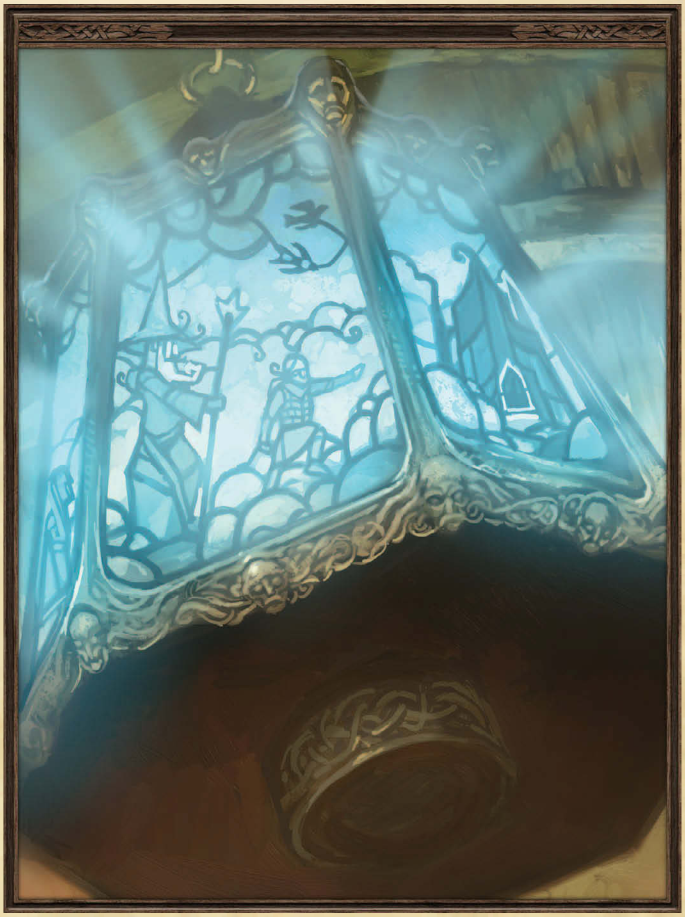
Woodmen-town lies forty miles to the south of Woodland Hall. It is a smaller settlement, lying in a clearing among the trees where the forest stream heads west, turning before the wood rises into low hills beyond its eastern shore. Several homesteads cluster around an ancient great house, built by a hero of the Woodmen when the Shadow was first banished from Mirkwood. With a history going back for more than nine hundred years, the House of Woodmen-town reunites the most prominent families of the Woodmen (even if Woodland Hall is the largest dwelling of their folk). Its council of Elders is given precedence in all folk-moots, and many war-leaders have been chosen among its warriors and chieftains.

Woodmen-town suffered greatly from the threat of the Shadow and, when noisome mists and vapours started to issue once again from Dol Guldur four centuries ago, many Woodmen left the village.

It is only thanks to the actions of the Wizard Radagast that Woodmen-town wasn't completely deserted. Today, many Woodmen are returning, as the darkness recedes from the western borders of the forest and birds and animals return to enliven the oak and beech woods with their cries.

The Hall of Balthi

This great house takes his name from a legendary hero of the folk. Under its roof the Woodmen keep their greatest treasure, a wondrous lamp burning with an everlasting blue light, the product of a craft so ancient it comes from a time before the reckoning of Men. It is held aloft by chains fastened to a beam of the roof.



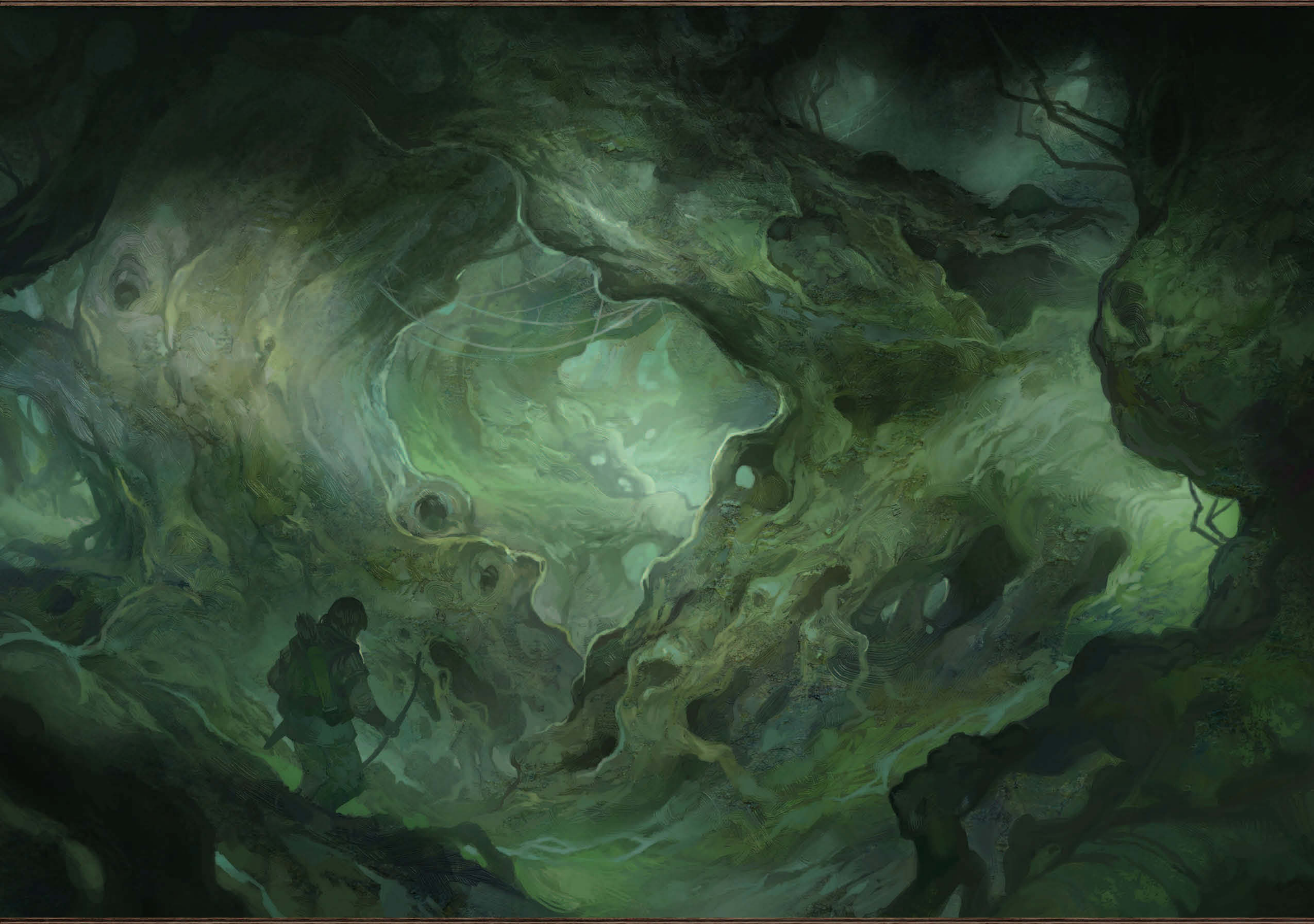
The lamp is encased in a fair and clear blue glass like a sapphire, wrought by craftsmen of the folk with figures in gold showing a young warrior, not much more than a boy, leading through the woods an elderly figure holding a staff, and advancing together towards a dark fortress on a hill. The Woodmen attribute the lamp with prodigious healing powers, and the great house is considered a hallowed place by all Houses of the Woodmen.

Mirkwood

Described by many as "the greatest of the forests of the Northern world", Mirkwood is a sea of woodland measuring more than 400 miles from north to south and 200 miles from east to west, at the point where the Old Forest Road crosses its width. It extends across the very middle of Wilderland, and its presence has shaped the history of the region for centuries. Nobody knows exactly what lies within its borders, as no one has thoroughly explored it.

The days when the Elvenking enforced his rule over all of Greenwood the Great are long gone, and the wild wood has reclaimed its hundreds of streams and shadowy vales, its clearings, bogs, hills and mountains. The creatures that inhabit it have become "queer and savage", as Beorn once put it, like the ever-present black squirrels, the thousands of black moths that crowd around any traveller carrying a source of light, and the hundreds of black butterflies that fly above the tree-tops. Many darker things have descended from the mountains that rise in the middle of the forest and have issued out of the pits of Dol Guldur, to breed and multiply in the dim shadows.

Fortunately for all who live near its edge, the forest has grown less dark since the Necromancer was driven from his stronghold in the south of Mirkwood, and some think that it will soon be possible to open the Old Forest Road to traffic once again.



Heart of Mirkwood

Trackless and unconquered by the light, the Heart of Mirkwood is the rotten core of the forest. Here the trees have huge, gnarled trunks, their twisted branches are heavy with strands upon strands of ivy and their roots are so tangled that in some places it is impossible to set foot upon the open ground. Many creatures have made their lair in this region, the darkest part of the forest, and most spiders seem to emerge from its remote corners. Nothing that goes on two legs is welcome here, and not even the boldest of Orcs dares to enter.

Northern Mirkwood

This region borders with the Woodland Realm, where the Forest River cuts the northernmost portion of Mirkwood neatly in half. Despite its proximity to the realm of Thranduil, this area is very dark, and dense cobwebs stretch from tree to tree; the clear sign of the presence of Spiders. For a while now, the only viable way across Mirkwood is found here, where the Forest Gate gives entrance to the Elf-path.

This is a trail made by the Silvan Elves, and it is protected by the Elvenking's magic from being overgrown or blocked by cobwebs. Near its eastern end, a small forest river interrupts the path with dark, swift waters said to carry an enchantment capable of making anyone who drinks from it drowsy and forgetful.

Mountains of Mirkwood

The Mountains of Mirkwood were once known by the Elves as the Dark Mountains because of the colour of their slopes, covered by dense forests of dark fir. With the passing of the centuries the name assumed a different interpretation, as the Dark Lord's most hideous creatures began to haunt the range.

It is from cold caves under these mountains that the great bats that participated in the Battle of Five Armies came from, and many returned there to mend their wounds and brood upon their defeat. From a spring among these mountains the Enchanted Stream flows to meet the Forest River to the north, as do several other brooks and creeks that lose themselves in winding courses among the trees of Mirkwood or in the Long Marshes to the east.

Southern Mirkwood

Southern Mirkwood was the land of the Necromancer. His dark tower sits upon a hill surrounded by a forest of dark firs. From its gate issue dozens of paths and trails that spread like a web across the region, the roads once used by his many servants, spies and soldiers. Today, the vast fortress of Dol Guldur is empty and silent, but the presence of its former master echoes still in its many dark halls and chambers. His malevolent will weighs upon the region like a curse, and his influence is felt by anyone who tries to approach it, and by those creatures that still lurk in the area, waiting.

The Narrows of the Forest

Approximately 140 miles south of the Old Forest Road, the width of the forest narrows until it measures less than 100 miles across. This tapering 'waist' was created centuries ago by the work of a powerful folk of Northmen that once lived in the lands to the west of the wild wood. The large indentation along the eastern border of Mirkwood is all that is left of their realm. They cleared it by felling many trees for the building of their homes and to make space for their pastures.

Several paths made by the Silvan Elves used to cross the entire width of the Narrows of the Forest, and other folks made use of them when the Elvenking forsook these lands. Today, many Woodmen know where these tracks start but nobody knows whether they lead anywhere or simply disappear where the forest is darker. Stories tell of how these paths are haunted by Wood-wights, restless ghosts of Northmen who died as slaves when an enemy folk took their land, centuries ago.

Western Mirkwood

The wide portion of the forest that extends to the west of the Mountains of Mirkwood is as dark and dreary as most of the wild wood. Here, the Old Forest Road used to enter Mirkwood, approximately thirty miles east of the Old Ford. Also known as the 'Dwarf-road', the Old Forest Road used to run across the forest for over 200 miles, to emerge where it was interrupted by the Running River. At the time of the journey of Bilbo, the road was said to be used by Goblins and overgrown by the vegetation. Five years later, the situation might have improved as the Orcs have been

severely diminished at the Battle of Five Armies, and the road might soon be opened again.

Woodland Realm

The area of Mirkwood to the north of the Forest River is claimed by the Elvenking as his own domain. In another age of the world, the Elvenking sat at court on the hill of Amon Lanc, where today stands the dreaded fortress of Dol Guldur. But the day came when the King left his realm to bring war upon the Enemy at the head of a powerful host, and never returned. His mourning son took his place on the throne, and retreated north with his people. When, centuries, later the forest darkened and Orcs and spiders spread under its shadows, the Elvenking withdrew again, finding sanctuary in a stronghold under the earth, not far from the eastern side of Mirkwood.

Today his subjects dwell in wooded valleys of ancient oaks and beeches, along the river that runs out of the Grey Mountains to the north and flows into the Long Marshes to the east. Here, they live in houses and huts built upon the surface of the forest and high up on the branches of the trees.

The Halls of the Elvenking

Protected by magic and by great doors of stone, the underground fortress of the Wood-elves is a palace and treasury for their King, a refuge for their folk and a prison for their enemies. The Halls are built into a system of caves underneath a great hill, and host many comfortable chambers and passages, including the royal residence of King Thranduil. A subterranean watercourse flows under the hill where the wine cellars of the palace are located, along with the deep dungeons reserved for those who must be kept prisoner at the orders of the King.

Other Lands

Ancient rhymes remember that to the south of Wilderland lay realms with sunny vineyards, stone cities and lofty monarchs. Today most of these lands are known simply as names given to exotic goods, sold by adventurous merchants whose tales are difficult to tell apart from what they make up to sell their wares. To the north stretch the Grey Mountains where the Dwarves long delved, and the Withered Heath, the ancient breeding ground of Dragons. Beyond them lie the frozen wastes, enshrouded in cold mists and dark legends.

To the west extend the Misty Mountains, a range of forbidding peaks riddled by Goblin tunnels and mines, running for almost 800 miles from the far north to the south. To the east lay endless plains where wild folk dwell and multiply, until the day a new king or chieftain will once again harness their hatred and bring them to war against the west.

- Campaign - Outlines

It appeared that Gandalf had been to a great council of the white wizards, masters of lore and good magic; and that they had at last driven the Necromancer from his dark hold in the south of Mirkwood.

When the Loremaster considers the elements that will be part of the tale of the last Great Years of the age that his players will experience, he should probably make up his mind about the kind of stories he is going to tell, which places his players are going to visit and what they will try to achieve with their deeds. All these potential questions may be used to draw a *campaign outline*, a framework that will help the players and the Loremaster to turn the group's gaming sessions into a consistent overarching narrative.

Campaign Structure

A campaign outline is structured as a combination of elements. These basic components may be discussed by the Loremaster and his players to create a campaign in tune with everybody's tastes, or can be chosen by the Loremaster alone to better achieve surprise or add a veil of mystery and wonder to the game.

Campaign Goal

What is the goal of the campaign? How its development is going to affect Middle-earth and its history? The objective of a campaign traces the potential changes that the gameplay is likely to force upon the world, hinting at what is going to happen and what the players can do about it.

Location

Where is most of the action going to take place? Wilderland is a wide region, including forbidding mountain ranges, secret vales, remote villages and deep forests. Are the heroes going to travel extensively, never staying in the same place for long, or will they choose a location as their main base of operations and give their services to its ruler?

Focus

There are many reasons why an individual might search for adventure, and it is likely that every hero has his own. But how would the Loremaster or his players reply to the question: 'What is your game all about?' Is it fighting the Enemy? Is it about exploring? Or is it politics? War? Horror? Every good story combines many of these themes, but a truly effective campaign outline should consider its underlying *leitmotif*, a recurrent subject matter that gives the game a distinctive 'background flavour'. The Loremaster may refer to the focus of the campaign when he is looking for a source of inspiration, and players find it easier to determine their own goals when the narrative is more thematically consistent.

Company

Does the campaign outline offer a particular reason why the heroes have gotten together to pursue a common goal? Maybe they are all outcasts, individual shunned by their community. Or are they champions, elected to fight the darkness on behalf of their folks? Or are they secret saviours, bound to fight the Shadow without the comfort of public recognition?

Loremaster Characters

Who will side with the characters in their struggle? And who will oppose them? The cast of Loremaster characters is extremely important, as its composition more than anything else will provide a campaign outline with a ring of authenticity and distinctiveness. As far as allies are concerned, the sources contain an extensive supply of memorable individuals to be used as recurring characters, and this guide presents several among them and interprets them in gaming terms. But every good story needs a villain, and a campaign outline should devote at least a few lines to one or more characters or creatures that might be featured as the company's most prominent adversary.

The Darkening of Mirkwood

Under the boughs of Mirkwood there was deadly strife of Elves and Men and fell beasts.

In the year 2951, Sauron sent the Ringwraiths to reclaim his dark hold of Dol Guldur in yet another chapter in the struggle between darkness and light for control of Mirkwood. In the following decades, Sauron succeeded in making Dol Guldur the starting point for large-scale attacks against Lórien and the Woodland Realm. Even though the Free Peoples were ultimately victorious, many lost their lives and Wilderland at large suffered greatly.

The Darkening of Mirkwood campaign outline places the heroes in the middle of that coming war, alongside those who fight the shadow that threatens to engulf the forest and subjugate all those who live near and inside it.

Can the heroes change what has been written? Will they succeed in weakening the power in Dol Guldur and protecting the folks that live in the forest? Or will they fail and worsen their fate?

The Darkening of Mirkwood Structure

The following information is gives the Loremaster a starting point, a set of narrative foundations to be used, tweaked and expanded by the playing group once play

begins. Most of what is contained in this chapter is the product of speculation and can be used as is, altered or ignored as the Loremaster sees fit to better conform to his own views and to better tailor the setting around his players' choices.

The Darkening of Mirkwood supplement takes the outline presented and expands it into a fully fledged campaign.

Campaign Goal

Wilderland changes dramatically in the years that separate the tale told in *The Hobbit* and what is recounted in *The Lord of the Ring*s. For example, the Woodmen are described in *The Hobbit* as being "many... brave and well-armed" and inhabiting several farmsteads and villages in the woods, along the Great River or at the foot of the Misty Mountains, but are barely given a mention in *The Lord of the Rings*.

While this could be attributed to several reasons, a feasible explanation is that they were gravely diminished as a people by the rise of the dark power dwelling in Dol Guldur. Radagast himself, a worthy Wizard belonging to the same order of Saruman the Wise and Gandalf, plays a very small part in the War of the Ring and by the end of the year 3018 he is nowhere to be found when scouts from Rivendell come to search for him at his 'old home' at Rhosgobel.

So, what happened exactly? Could the history of Wilderland have gone otherwise? This campaign outline lets a gaming group try to provide an answer to both questions: the Loremaster and his players will face the growth of the Shadow over Mirkwood and the efforts of their heroes can prove the key that will prevent the Dark Lord from succeeding. What will come to pass before the beginning of the War of the Ring is going to be determined by their struggle.

Location

This outline is mainly centred on the Land of the Woodmen, with a focus on their settlements to the east of the Great River. In many ways, this location provides the ideal setting for a campaign as the source material leaves a lot of room for modification and expansion, allowing ambitious players a large amount of freedom.

The information about the area presented in this volume can be used to create a campaign with a Man-centric, almost historical feel to it, with Elves and Dwarves (and Hobbits) used to enhance the wonder of the setting with their otherworldly quality, either introduced by the Loremaster or by the characters. The resulting mood can be compared to that of the first chapters of *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings*, where the Shire provides a strangely familiar, almost ordinary setting, made unusual and wondrous by the introduction of 'outlandish folks' like Dwarves, Elves or 'wandering conjurors'.

Focus

The focus of the campaign is the changes and upheavals that the war will bring to Wilderland: whatever the outcome of the conflict, the actions of the heroes will affect the fate of the land and shape its history. There are several subjects that can be explored in a campaign centred around war, and all of them fit very well the game's overarching theme – the Twilight of the Third age – from the meaning of heroism in Tolkien's writing (sacrifice for the benefit of others), to that of loss and the wear of the world (things pass and are forgotten, either in victory or defeat).

Company

A company of adventurers involved in the war for Mirkwood can be composed of a diverse range of characters, as having a common Enemy makes for a very strong bond. What will make a difference is the way that the companions choose to participate in the conflict. For example, they might openly join the Woodmen in their fight for survival against Dol Guldur, possibly with the ambition of one day becoming leaders of a folk without kings; or they might choose Radagast the Brown as their guide, and act as his agents and emissaries; or they might never choose a side, and simply follow their call to adventure, often facing situations that will see them take part in the larger conflict anyway.

Loremaster Characters

As far as potential allies are concerned, the main Loremaster characters for this outline are Beorn and Radagast, two of the most mysterious figures created by Tolkien. The Loremaster and his players have a chance to solve some of the riddles regarding them that the sources didn't provide an answer to, like for example what was the nature of Beorn's enchantment, or when or how did he die, or why Radagast wasn't ultimately involved in person in the war against Sauron.

Beorn

> **Others say that he is a man descended from the first men who lived before Smaug or the other dragons came into this part of the world, and before the goblins came into the hills out of the North... At any rate he is under no enchantment but his own.**

Beorn started to establish his position as a great chief after the Battle of Five Armies, when he began uniting many men under his rule. Nobody knows why he did so, and nobody seems able to divine his plans for the future: Beorn seems content today as a leader of a folk as he seemed once to enjoy his previous isolation. His followers obey his loose rules out of respect for their leader, and a council of elder chieftains comes to his house regularly to interpret his will and let it be known to the rest of the population.

Beorn maintains good relations with both Gandalf the Grey and Radagast the Brown, and the two Wizards have been seen arriving at the house of Beorn together on occasions.

Beorn appears as a huge man of indeterminate age with a thick black beard and hair. Powerfully built with strong arms and muscular legs, he speaks with a growling voice when angered and laughs a great rolling laugh when amused.

Encountering Beorn

One thing that didn't change since his solitary days is that Beorn still doesn't like Dwarves and 'beggars' – his

contemptuous name for all travellers – and rarely invites foreigners into his house. This distrust has been passed to the Beornings at large, and as a consequence nobody can enter their lands without being questioned or even threatened (they make an exception for the Woodmen, as they are not seen as foreigners in these areas).

Requests to see Beorn are usually immediately turned down by whoever met the applicants, unless they are persuaded of the importance of the matter with clear evidence. And even if the heroes succeed in getting to meet Beorn, it won't be easy to get anything out of him: the shape-shifter rarely concerns himself with the dealings of other folks, so he won't be interested in things that do not directly involve either his lands or his followers. He treats events of any magnitude that happen in other regions as vague rumours, and will quickly become uninterested in what the adventurers have to say about that, unless the heroes go to great lengths to involve him.

Beorn as a Patron

As explained above, Beorn is little concerned with the affairs of adventurers, and may take into consideration the possibility of entrusting the company with a task only if he has a pressing need and he thinks that the heroes are more suited to the endeavour than his most trusted men.

A mission from Beorn will most likely be a very dangerous business, involving hunting or directly facing some dire threat menacing the lands of the Beornings. For example, The companions may find themselves be asked to pursue a band of raiding Orcs and Wargs into the mountains from whence they came, or track down a solitary Troll that is terrorising an area; when such an occasion arises, Beorn is likely to have the company rely on its own devices, as if the mission was a test of sorts.

Beorn can be made a patron of the company if the heroes met him during an Adventuring phase and only if at least one character in the group possesses a rating of Valour 3 or more, or at least a companion is a Beorning or Woodman with a Standing score of at least 1. A company with Beorn as a patron may meet him when spending a Fellowship phase in his house or in a nearby location.

The Enchantment of Beorn

The origins of Beorn are mysterious at best. The few things we know about his past seem to suggest that the shape-shifter once used to live somewhere in the mountains or that he descended from a folk that used to live there, and that someone or something forced him to leave, or forbids him from returning. Moreover, when Bilbo first meets him he seems to be living under some sort of obligation forcing upon him his solitary life, maybe even his peculiar diet of cream and honey. Whether this obligation is a curse, an enchantment or even a self-imposed stricture tied to a vow or oath, the details remain unclear.

What is certain is that the day that Beorn took part in the Battle of Five Armies his 'enchantment' seems to have been somewhat altered: Beorn interrupted his secluded life, apparently retaining his shape-shifting powers.

While Beorn and his secrets should remain at least partly hidden in the obscurity that Tolkien wrapped around them, the playing groups might be tempted to find a few answers, possibly letting the Loremaster develop the following information into intriguing plot hooks.

- The fact that Beorn doesn't eat animals, either domestic or wild, seems to point to a sort of geas, a magical obligation that was possibly laid upon him at birth or that he imposed on himself at a later date. As often happens in myth, this stricture might even be the key to his shape-shifting ability. Today, Beorn is teaching some of his secrets to his followers, and if his powers are indeed due to such a geas, then the process might involve the imposition of rules similar to the ones he himself follows: Beornings may have to abstain from eating animal meat for at least one week every month to enjoy the benefits of their Virtues, or the requirement imposed by Beorn, that all Beornings should attend the festivities held at Yule-tide at his house, might involve the renewal of vows.

- The old solitary life of Beorn may have had something to do with Bolg, the Orc overlord of Mount Gundabad, as the Battle of Five Armies seems to be the episode that released Beorn from this obligation. This detail hints at a sort of old feud between Bolg or his father

Azog, and Beorn himself or some of his ancestors who lived in the mountains. If the story of Beorn was one of revenge, then was the extinction of Azog's bloodline a sufficient compensation for the wrong he presumably suffered? Is the feud really finished, or will a new Lord of Gundabad rise and come to look for Beorn or his kin? How will Beorn die – as he isn't active by the time of the War of the Ring?

- In the years following the creation of his new folk, Beorn will establish a progeny fathering at least a son – Grimbeorn. As Grimbeorn is called 'the old' by the beginning of the War of the Ring, he should be born at least before the year 2970. It is said that the men of his line had the power of taking bear's shape – does this require Beorn to lay his geas upon his son, maybe during a ceremony held in a sacred vale in the Misty Mountains, where the Great Bears of the mountains used to live? Must Beorn lose his own power to pass it over to his son? If the companions succeed in becoming friends with the old shape-shifter they might be called to help him in these private proceedings.

Beorn the Skinchanger

If the Loremaster requires Beorn to appear to help a company of heroes involved in a difficult fight he may use the stats provided below. A powerful and dangerous deus-ex-machina device, Beorn should be employed only

Beorn the Skinchanger (in bear shape):

When Beorn appears at a battle scene he always arrives already in bear shape (he is never seen shape-shifting). He always fights relentlessly, assuming a forward stance for the entire episode.

Attribute Level			
9			
Endurance	Hope	Parry	Armour
99	12	12	4d
Skills			
Personality	5	Survival	3
Movement	4	Custom	0
Perception	3	Vocation	3
Weapon Skills			
Maul	4		
Damage: 9	Edge: 10	Injury: 16	Called shot: *The shield carried by the target has been smashed.*
Special Abilities			
Giant-size	*Beorn is neither knocked out nor killed when reduced to zero Endurance or if wounded once. When at zero Endurance or when wounded once he keeps fighting until wounded twice, or reduced to zero Endurance AND wounded.*		
Toughness	*Reduce Beorn's Hope point score by one to reduce the Endurance loss caused by an enemy's attack by 9 points (Beorn's Attribute Level).*		
Terrible Strength	*Following a successful attack, reduce Beorn's Hope point score by one to increase the target's Endurance loss by 9 points.*		
Great Wrath	*Reduce Beorn's Hope point score by one to make a Personality roll versus a difficulty equal to 10 plus the highest Attribute level among all foes. On a successful roll the enemy loses a number of Hate points: one point on a success, plus one point for every ᘓ icon rolled. The Loremaster assigns the Hate point loss to the creatures opposing Beorn in any way he sees fit.*		

if the players have done something to actually prompt his intervention. The characteristics of Beorn in bear shape have been formatted in a similar fashion to the creatures contained in the Adversary chapter.

Radagast

> "...perhaps you have heard of my good cousin Radagast, who lives near the Southern borders of Mirkwood?"

Radagast the Brown is a Wizard. He abides in a small wood of ancient oaks in Rhosgobel, close to the southwestern eaves of Mirkwood, where many Woodmen have come to stay near him. Once content to spend his time in quiet conversation with birds and animals (whose diverse languages he seems to be able to speak fluently) Radagast had an active part in the White Council's preparations to attack Dol Guldur, and since that time he has shown an increased interest in the matters of the people living in the area.

Like his peers Saruman the White and Gandalf the Grey, Radagast has always appeared to the eyes of mortals like a vigorous old man who doesn't seem to wither and grow weaker with the passing of the years. He wears a tall, wide-brimmed hat and brown cloak over clothes of earthen colours, and sports a long, wild-looking reddish beard slowly turning grey, and long, unkempt hair of the same hue. He usually paces his stride with his long Oaken staff.

Encountering Radagast

Radagast can be encountered in his house at Rhosgobel at any time. He seems to rarely leave his small cottage, apart from short walks into the forest to the east. Despite his solitary life, Radagast seems to be well informed about events happening in the land of the Woodmen at any time, sometimes betraying knowledge of things befalling in more distant places in Wilderland. While never really rude, his years of isolation (or his friendship with Beorn...) seem to have made his conversation come across as brusque or abrupt, as if he was unused to the common laws of courtesy recognised by Men, Dwarves and Elves.

Strangers wanting to meet Radagast and asking the local Woodmen for directions are led all the way to his house, reached by a pathway of white stones starting close to the Great Hall of Rhosgobel. Visitors trying to reach the house of the Wizard alone seem to lose their way easily and find themselves back in front of the Great Hall after walking aimlessly for some time. During the warm months of the year, any visitor might be forced to wait for a while, together with the many Woodmen coming to see the Wizard and seek his help.

Radagast as a Patron

Seventy years before his appearance during the War of the Ring, the Brown Wizard is the perfect replacement for Gandalf as the figure of a wise and enigmatic counsellor. Radagast's own goals and achievements have been left indefinite at best by Tolkien, leaving ample room for creative speculation. Companions choosing Radagast as a patron might do so more to seek his support, rather than because they expect him to offer something to accomplish. Radagast possesses an extensive knowledge of herbs of any kind, and healers who follow his advice are able to find the most expeditious remedy for any type of ailment. Moreover, his animal friends may deliver messages or warnings across Wilderland in a very short time. If Radagast needs the help of a company of heroes that chose him as their patron, then he can find them quickly through his animal friends if they are to be found anywhere in Wilderland. The animal messenger will carry the Wizard's message, or bid the heroes to go and find Radagast.

For some reasons, Radagast does not travel much. He seems to have limited his area of interest to the places immediately surrounding Rhosgobel. One of the reasons might be that his own capability as a Wizard would be reduced if he was outside the borders of Wilderland. A mission from the Brown Wizard will most likely involve Dol Guldur, the primary concern of Radagast the Brown for many decades.

Radagast can be chosen as a patron if the companions met him during an Adventuring phase and only if at least

one character in the group possesses a rating of Wisdom 3 or more, or if at least one companion is a Beorning or a Woodman with a Standing score of 1 or more. A company with Radagast as a patron may meet him when spending a Fellowship phase in Rhosgobel.

The Magic of Radagast

The wizardry of Radagast seems to be connected to the animal and plant life populating Middle-earth. He is learned in the lore of herbs and beasts, and seems to have a special friendship with birds. He is also said to be "a master of shapes and changes of hue", an ability possibly enabling him to accomplish different things: from assuming the form of an animal himself (like a bird, a terrestrial beast, or even a fish) to altering the form or colour of someone or something else.

A company of adventurers enjoying the friendship of Radagast might be magically hidden from the eyes of all wicked creatures as they advance on a mission undertaken with the favour of the Wizard, or they might find it singularly easy to fish from the forest's rivers, or particularly refreshing to rest under the boughs of its trees.

Additional Setting Material

The following entries provide additional historical details that the Loremaster can use to flesh out the cultures featured in the campaign. Much of the information has been created purposefully for the game, using different historical and literary sources.

The Necromancer

A war between light and darkness has been fought for almost two thousand years under the eaves of the forest of Wilderland. It started when a shadow first took shape in Greenwood the Great in the year 1050 of the Third Age.

Later known as the Necromancer, for centuries he was allowed to slowly increase in power, until Gandalf the Grey challenged him and forced him to retreat. This gave the forest and its inhabitants a respite, and many folks were able to prosper and multiply.

Four hundred years later, the Necromancer returned to his black fortress, his stature increased, and darkness crept once again under the trees of Mirkwood. But this time he faced a stronger opposition: a White Council of the Wise and Powerful was formed at the request of Lady Galadriel and a watch was kept on the Hill of Sorcery.

For almost five centuries the black sorcerer bided his time, spreading his malevolence from his stronghold in the forest, slowly tainting animals and plants alike, and stirring wicked spirits. He extended his corrupting influence over almost the entirety of the forest, with the exception of the Woodland Realm beyond the Mountains of Mirkwood, and the Land of the Woodmen to the west. While he expected nothing less from the Elves, he was surprised by the endurance demonstrated by mere mortal Men.

The Lamp of Balthi

Legends and songs of the Woodmen remember the name of Balthi ("the Bold"), the young son of a Mirkwood hunter. Centuries ago, the boy led the Grey Wizard through the forest to the hill of Dol Guldur.

When Gandalf emerged from its pits, he entrusted the boy with an object wrapped in a cloth, ordering him to fly as enemies were approaching. The young boy obeyed and ran away at once, but later the same day he unfolded the cloth to reveal a lamp shining with a cold and clear blue flame.

He immediately covered the lamp, but the little light that escaped from the folds betrayed him and he was spotted by an Orc tracker who let loose an arrow. Balthi was hit, but succeeded in distancing his pursuers despite his wound, as he wisely chose to remain under the cover of Mirkwood, where his enemies expected him to leave the wild wood by the shortest route. Several days later the exhausted boy reached a clearing in a valley by the Dusky River. He was led there by the joyful singing of River-

maidens, and finally fell asleep expecting never to wake again. He woke several days later instead, fully healed of his wounds and weariness.

When he finally rejoined his kin, he returned with them to the same clearing and built a great hall to live in and to protect the treasure he received from the Grey Wizard.

For four hundred years Woodmen-town prospered, as the forest slowly healed from the hurt caused by the Necromancer. The Wizard Radagast became a trusted friend of the Woodmen and they learned much from him and his ways. When the Necromancer returned to the forest the Woodmen were troubled, but they were able to endure: they had become a strong folk with powerful allies by that time, with the means and weapons to counter the aggression of the Shadow.

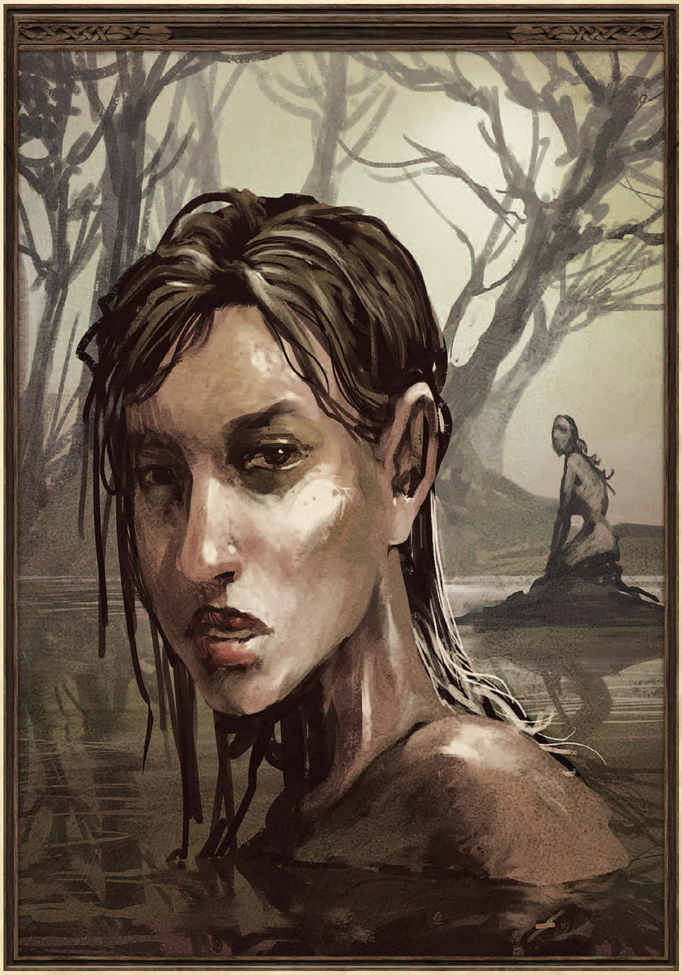
The Werewolf of Mirkwood

When Sauron reclaimed the fortress of Dol Guldur in the year 2460, all malevolent creatures perceived his presence and newfound power. In its lair under the Mountains of Mirkwood, an ancient monster awakened from its age-old slumber: it was no less than an Evil of the Ancient World, a servitor spirit embodied in the form of a great ravenous Wolf. It emerged from its dark den, and started prowling the depths of the forest.

In the following years, the Werewolf killed many Elves in its hunting, until the Elvenking withdrew the borders of his realm further to the north. As soon as he was roused, the Werewolf of Mirkwood was aware of the light of the lamp hanging in the great Hall of Balthi. Unable to locate it precisely, it perceived it as a maddeningly painful presence, as its flame burns with a light coming from a hateful past. The characteristics for the Werewolf of Mirkwood can be found in on page 247.

The River-maidens

Twenty miles to the east of Rhosgobel, in the midst of Mirkwood, there is a deep and windless lake. It is called the Black Tarn, but by the year 2946 nobody remembers why as its cold waters are a glassy green and the sun seems to shine fully upon it all year long. The Woodmen come here to fish the silver trout that can be seen swimming under its surface in the morning and evening. Radagast the Brown can often be encountered here, wandering around the woods around the lake.



The lake is home to the River-maidens, three fair creatures in female form that at times can be seen swimming just below the surface of the Dusky River's waters. Amidst its eddies they play, singing songs and sometimes helping, sometimes playing tricks upon the Woodmen that come to the river or to the lake to fish. They understand the speech of beasts and birds, and may assume the shape of the silvery trout that live in the river.

Supplementary Chronology

The following chronology is composed mainly of events created for the Darkening of Mirkwood campaign outline. The Loremaster is free to alter it in any way he sees fit. Several entries summarise what has been presented previously for ease of reference.

Year 2063

Gandalf enters Dol Guldur. During his exploration he finds an ancient Elven lamp glowing with an inner light. The Necromancer flees. The Wizard entrusts the young Balthi with the keeping of the lamp. Balthi founds Woodmantown. The shadow loosens its grip on Mirkwood: many areas of the forest become safe to live in and, the River-maidens grow less wild and start having friendly contacts with the Woodmen.

Year 2460

The Necromancer returns to Mirkwood. A new darkening of the forest begins. The Werewolf of Mirkwood awakens. In the following years, Thranduil the Elvenking withdraws the borders of his kingdom further to the north.

Year 2463

The first meeting of the White Council is held in Rivendell. Radagast talks of the darkening of Mirkwood. The council decides not to intervene for the moment, deeming the Necromancer to be a lesser manifestation of evil, maybe a Ringwraith.

Gandalf the Grey reveals to the Brown Wizard how he came upon the Lamp of Balthi. From a later talk with Saruman the White concerning the arts of the Ancient World, Radagast is persuaded that the light of the lamp has the power to keep at bay the darkness issuing from Dol Guldur.

Year 2850

For centuries, the Necromancer has been left free to work his sorcery from the dark hill of Dol Guldur. He has been able to spread his influence all over Mirkwood, but contrary to his plans he has failed so far in scaring the Woodmen away from the forest.

Prompted by Elrond's concerns and his own, Gandalf returns to Dol Guldur. He discovers that the Necromancer is indeed Sauron, who is secretly gathering all the Rings and is actively looking for the One. Having left the dark hold with this terrible knowledge, the Grey Wizard travels extensively, to prepare for a confrontation against the Dark Lord.

The following year Gandalf urges the White Council to take action, but he is opposed by Saruman the White, who deems such a direct action to be unnecessary, as he believes that Sauron has been greatly diminished by the loss of the One Ring.

Year 2900

Despite the danger of these lands, many bold men and women make their way back into the vales of the Great River from the South. They are welcomed by Radagast to 'live in among the more pleasant woods in the valleys and along the river-shores'. Some of them have been persuaded to leave their lands and move north by Saruman the White, who is working with the Brown Wizard in an attempt to strengthen the communities living around the Gladden Fields; others have heard about Beorn and the watch he keeps over the lands to the north of the Old Ford.

Year 2941

The White Council finally decides to put forth its strength and makes preparations for an attack on Dol Guldur. Sauron anticipates the aggression and leaves his dark hold. Mirkwood is made partly wholesome again.

Year 2946

At the council held during the Gathering of Five Armies, the Woodmen are represented by an envoy chosen during a folk-moot of all Houses of the Woodmen (this role could be fulfilled by a player-hero). From the vales of the Great River he brings comforting news of the enduring peace, of hunters exploring Mirkwood and of the Misty Mountains almost free from the threat of Wargs and Goblins.

Year 2951

In the first months of the year, three Ringwraiths arrive in Mirkwood. One enters Dol Guldur and starts haunting the place to terrorise any living being that might come near it. The other two roam the surrounding area to stir all wicked things still inhabiting the woods.

By the end of the year the Southern Mirkwood region becomes again a Dark Land, as more and more evil creatures enter the forest.

Year 2952

A Ringwraith leaves Dol Guldur and goes north, to reach the lair of the Werewolf of Mirkwood. Here the slave of the Ring reveals to the beast that the source of its torment is the flame of a lamp burning with a light born in the Uttermost West, and that the lamp is in possession of the Woodmen. The Werewolf goes south to hunt for the lamp, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake.

In the meantime, another Nazgûl lures one of the River-maidens away from the Black Tarn, and traps her in a pool in Dol Guldur. Her mischievous side is turned to wickedness.

In the following years, the Woodmen dwelling in and near Rhosgobel witness the green waters of the Black Tarn slowly turn dark. Soon only misshapen black trouts seem to swim in it and folks begin to avoid it. Tales circulate about the songs of River-maidens luring travellers to a watery death in the lake. Many Woodmen are confused, as other witnesses keep relating stories about fair River-maidens helping out fishermen in their trade along the river shores.

Further Adventures

(Bilbo) ... he had no close friends, until some of his younger cousins began to grow up. The eldest of these, and Bilbo's favourite, was young Frodo Baggins.

There are several ways that a hero's adventures might come to an end. Adventurers can die fighting against the servants of the Dark Lord, or their will can finally break under the burden of the Shadow. But there is another possibility: a hero can retire from adventuring willingly; to peacefully return to his own land and spend his remaining years amongst his loved ones.

But the struggle against the Shadow knows no respite, and when a hero leaves the game another one must rise to take his place. It could be a sister or a brother, a close or distant cousin, or a son or daughter eager to follow in the footsteps of an adventurous parent. It could even be someone not related by blood to the previous player-hero at all, but simply an individual who was inspired by the adventurer's deeds.

Adventuring Career

Living the life of an adventurer is a hard endeavour for members of any culture. Dwarves and Elves may be long-lived in comparison to Hobbits and especially Men, but their capability to deal with the harsh struggle against the Shadow isn't really superior to that of the other races.

In fact, it is rare for a hero who survives the many threats he encounters to remain active for more than two decades; most can only bear this exhausting way of life for a maximum of 15 to 20 years before they return home to their families and to the many duties that are expected of such a remarkable member of the community.

Retirement

The suggested pace for a *The One Ring* campaign sees the Loremaster and his players take part in four to six sessions of play for every year of game time. This translates roughly to an average yearly rate of 13 Experience points for every character, enough to see them rise to excellence in about 15 years. If a hero has gotten this far with his body and spirit intact, he should consider himself very lucky and seriously think about retiring voluntarily from active adventuring.

By choosing to retire, a hero ensures he has the chance to pass along as much of his experience as he can to whoever is going to take his place, before a well-aimed sword stroke finally ends his career, or sorrow and regret nest too deeply into his soul (see Heroic Heritage).

Heroic Heritage

When a hero dies, succumbs to the Shadow or retires from adventuring, his player must create a new character to take his place. When this happens, the new adventurer starts the game with a number of additional Experience points, representing the knowledge and experience the previous character was able to pass on to his heir.

This bonus is shown on the Heroic Heritage table below, and is based on the total number of Experience points that a hero accumulated up to the moment of his demise or retirement, and is modified by the precise nature of the hero's departure from active adventuring.

Heroic Heritage:

Experience point total	Experience bonus
10-19	2
20-39	4
40-59	6
60-99	8
100-159	10
160-249	12
250+	14

The circumstances in which the hero left the game modifies the amount of Experience inherited by the hero's successor:

- When a hero dies or succumbs to the Shadow, the number of Experience points passed along to his heir is reduced by the number of permanent Shadow points they have. When a hero retires willingly, the heroic heritage bonus is applied without modifiers.

Astrith has been adventuring for many years and has gained much renown as a ruthless opponent of the Shadow. Recently the weight of all she has experienced has begun to take its toll. She has been awarded a total of 112 Experience points but has gained 4 permanent Shadow points. Her player decides that Astrith retires to her home in Dale and passes her quest to her younger brother Erling. This means that Erling will have an additional 10 Experience points to spend before he sets out on the road. If Astrith's player had chosen to continue the game with Astrith, and she had died or succumbed to the Shadow, Erling would only have inherited 6 Experience points.

Heroism

> "I do not love the bright sword for its sharpness, nor the arrow for its swiftness, nor the warrior for his glory. I love only that which they defend."

What distinguishes a hero from a common individual? Superior valour? Greater wisdom? Fearlessness and prowess in battle? Generosity and nobility of spirit? Several aspects of heroism are explored and exemplified in both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien doesn't portray his heroes as warriors who "love war and valour as things good in themselves", but more as generous souls who are willing to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of others.

Heroic Death

In *The One Ring*, adventurers face mortal threats and may die. If this unfortunate moment arrives, the Loremaster and his players should consider the circumstances of the adventurer's demise, and decide if the situation fits Tolkien's ideas of a truly heroic death: not the result of recklessness or the idle pursuit of renown or honour, but the sacrifice of an individual striving to protect or save others.

When a hero dies a proper heroic death, the Loremaster should reward the character by treating it as if the hero retired willingly – and thus shouldn't reduce his Heroic Heritage bonus by the hero's permanent Shadow rating, as the adventurer cleansed the memory of his flaws by sacrificing himself for the benefit of others.

- Part Nine: The Marsh-Bell -

The
- Marsh-Bell -

The marshes and bogs had spread wider and wider on either side. Paths had vanished, and many a rider and wanderer too, if they had tried to find the lost ways across.

- **When:** The company may undertake this adventure at any time, but it is better suited as an introductory episode for a new company, set in early spring 2946.

- **Where:** Esgaroth or Dale, or anywhere close to the Long Marshes.

- **What:** Two Dwarven messengers left the Lonely Mountain several days ago on an errand. They now seem to have disappeared in the Long Marshes. The Kingdom under the Mountain is astir, and the news quickly reaches Dale and Esgaroth.

The Marsh-dwellers are an ancient breed of shadow creatures; deadly and terrible, their name even appears in old rhymes told to scare Hobbit children in the distant Shire (but the real meaning of the rhyme has long been forgotten). They still haunt the Long Marshes, and have recently captured Balin and his travelling companion.

- **Why:** There are several reasons why the companions should feel compelled to find out what happened to the two unfortunate Dwarves. First, a chance to participate in a rescue is exactly the sort of opportunity to make a name for themselves that young adventurers are looking for. Second, Glóin, a very important Dwarf, is offering a reward and will certainly be very grateful if the companions come to his aid. Third, if there are any Dwarves in the company, they will probably feel that it is their duty to do what they can to help one of their own kind.

- **Who:** As the heroes will discover during the adventure, one of the emissaries is no less than Balin, one of the twelve Dwarves that undertook the Quest for Erebor. He was accompanied by his cousin Óin.

Adventuring Phase

The adventure is presented in three parts, based on the locations and events providing the focus for the story. The Loremaster will find it easy to determine when a session should be set up as an episode and when it would be wiser to switch to narrative time instead.

Part One - Where Noisome Waters Pour

The main aim of the first part is to entrust the company with a mission, but it also serves as a simple introduction to the setting and to several game mechanics. At the end of this part, the players should have gained a greater understanding of the mood of the game, made the acquaintance of a famous character, and probably gained a few Advancement points.

Part Two - A Long and Weary Way

The second part of the scenario starts when the company decides to follow the steps of Balin and Óin. This section introduces the rules for journeys, and lets the characters have a first look at the Long Marshes area.

Part Three - Beside the Rotting River

The final part of the adventure should see the company face the challenge posed by the Marsh-dwellers. An enfeebled breed of creatures, they should pose a challenge only to the weariest of heroes, unless the adventurers are unwary enough to fall into their various traps.

Part One
Where Noisome Waters Pour

If this is the players' first game, the first session can be conveniently set at Esgaroth. Lake-town is a free city, where adventurers hailing from different places come in search of opportunities to make their name. In addition to Northmen of all extractions, Elves and Dwarves are a common sight, as both the Woodland Realm and the Kingdom under the Mountain have interests in the city. Even Hobbits may come to Lake-town without raising too much of a commotion, as strange sights are becoming the norm, with merchants from the south and east bringing their wares into town with increasing regularity.

The following information is revealed to any Dwarven adventurer who makes conversation with a local, but it can otherwise be gathered without the need for a dice roll by any character actively looking for news about the two missing Dwarves in Dale or Esgaroth. If none of the adventurers are looking for news, they can get the same information by picking up rumours and succeeding in a roll of **Riddle**.

Hraf son of Hrabin, a Raven of the Mountain, has brought to Erebor some sinister tidings: two Dwarven messengers who left the Lonely Mountain on an errand are nowhere to be found. The Kingdom under the Mountain is astir, and Glóin the Dwarf himself has spread word that whoever provides news of the missing Dwarves will be richly rewarded.

Tip for new Loremasters

Your players might want to look around before they follow this lead. When you are preparing for the adventure, take a moment to think about the places they could visit and people they could encounter. Take a look at the information on Esgaroth found on page 185.

Encountering Glóin

If the adventurers are interested in meeting the famous Dwarf and try to get officially involved in the search for Balin and Oin, their wishes are easily fulfilled: Glóin currently resides in Lake-town in a rich mansion close to the town-hall. He stays there for several weeks every year, acting as an envoy in Esgaroth for the King under the Mountain.

This meeting can be presented by the Loremaster following the structure for Encounters introduced on page 185: an **Introduction** stage followed by a quick **Interaction** should see if the player-heroes are fit to be sent on an official mission or not.

Set Tolerance

Glóin, a veteran of many battles, prizes Valour over Wisdom, so the basic Tolerance rating for the encounter is equal to the highest Valour rating among the companions. Unfortunately, he holds a grudge towards Silvan Elves, as he was imprisoned by the Elvenking along with his companions during the Quest for Erebor.

- Glóin is prejudiced against Elves, which reduces the basic Tolerance rating for the Encounter by one if there are Elves in the company. Additionally, he will refuse to deal directly with an elf spokesman.

Luckily for the group, Glóin is eager to see his cousin and brother recovered as soon as possible, so the Tolerance rating of the Encounter receives a bonus of +1. Finally, if any companion is a Dwarf with a Standing rating the Loremaster should remember to take this into account.

Introduction

Glóin welcomes the company to his hall. As he emerges from his private quarters, he wipes ink from his fingers with barely contained impatience (his duties in Esgaroth keep him busy with a lot of paperwork). In 2946 Glóin

is 163 years old, an accomplished veteran who likes to consider that his adventuring days aren't over yet. He usually wears rich white clothes, or clothes of different colours with white trimming, matching the hue of the two points of his forked beard. Glóin is very courteous and fair-spoken under most circumstances, but today he is urgently looking for men of action, and grows quickly impatient with individuals trying to enter his graces with cunning words; as a consequence, the player-heroes will be lucky if they opt for designating a spokesman to state their intentions clearly:

- If the company chooses a spokesman to introduce the group, the difficulty of the action (roll of **Awe** or **Courtesy**) is set at the standard TN 14;
- If the players opt for individual rolls (most likely using **Courtesy**) they will face a *hard* difficulty of TN 16, as Glóin waits impatiently for them to introduce themselves.

Interaction

During the interaction stage, Glóin briefs the company with the additional details regarding the missing Dwarves, drawing on a piece of parchment a sketch of the route that the messengers opted to follow:

"My cousin Balin son of Fundin has left the Lonely Mountain with a companion. He was meant to personally deliver a letter, a formal invitation from King Dáin Ironfoot to the Lord of the Eagles for the coming Gathering of Five Armies, an important meeting to be held at the beginning of summer. He planned to go south along the Running River, to investigate the conditions of the Old Forest Road and possibly traverse it, now that the threat of Goblins has been greatly reduced."

Map 1 (page 300) shows the route that Balin and his companion Óin were supposed to follow. Unless Glóin is dealing directly with an Elf spokesman, he then adds the following:

"I don't know what happened, but unfortunately the possibilities are many in these days of doubt... if the perils of Wilderland were not enough, there are always the suspicious dwellers of the Woodland Realm to consider. They are sworn enemies of the Shadow, but unfortunately they don't love Dwarves and watch their land jealously. I hope my concerns are ill-placed, but I wouldn't be surprised if Balin had found himself again a guest of the Elvenking's celebrated hospitality..."

The players can make other rolls on request. **Insight** or **Riddle** are appropriate skills, and yield the following results:

- **Insight:** a successful roll reveals that Glóin is trying to hide his profound concern. A great or extraordinary success uncovers that the Dwarf is worried because it was his older brother Óin that chose to accompany Balin on his errand.
- **Riddle:** a successful roll lets a listener gather from half-spoken hints that Glóin first suspected that something was wrong because he experienced an episode of foresight. A great or extraordinary success reveals that the foresight concerned a sinister fate that might have befallen Óin.

Further Information

The following information can be revealed, fully or in part, to players as the outcome of their encounter with Glóin or as the result of investigating different leads.

Of Ravens and Dwarves

A Dwarf hero possessing the **Raven of the Mountain** virtue might think about seeking advice from his feathered friends: Hraf son of Hrabin is a friend of Glóin. Hraf was called a few days after Balin's departure, because Glóin had a most vivid and disturbing dream: Óin was drowning in dark waters. Hraf immediately left the Mountain and followed the route that Balin and Óin intended to follow, but could not find them anywhere. It was as if they had been swallowed by the marshes.

Note about Glóin's Dream

The dream applies well to the situation at hand, but this foresight episode is in fact related to things that won't transpire for many years: according to the sources, Óin will drown 48 years later in 2994, during Balin's ill-fated

attempt to recover Khazad-dûm, as he explores the West gate of Moria and stumbles upon the tentacled Watcher in the Water. While this is something the players might never discover, the vision gives the players a reason to be wary of any pool of water encountered during the adventure...

Glóin's Reward

Glóin intends to offer a princely reward to whoever returns Balin and Óin to the Lonely Mountain, but does not quantify the prize: he is not looking for mercenaries, but for adventurers motivated by more than just money.

- If the two missing Dwarves are brought back alive to Lake-town, every surviving adventurer will be awarded with silver and gold amounting to 5 points of Treasure.

Adventure Awaits

If the company went to see Glóin to offer their help, he soon evaluates their proposition and makes his decision based on what the players said and their characters did during the encounter:

If the heroes won Glóin's trust, they are officially tasked with the rescue of the two missing Dwarves and receive a map of the lands to the south of Esgaroth (Map 1). As the journey by river is the only safe alternative to cross the Long Marshes, Glóin also provides the adventurers with papers permitting them to borrow boats from the Lake-men.

If the heroes gathered information about the missing Dwarves without consulting Glóin, the Loremaster will have to adjust the adventure somewhat.

If the players met the Dwarf but failed at the Encounter, or if they played their characters inconsistently during the investigation, or made their own lives difficult in some way, the Loremaster should arrange events to make sure that the players feel that even their bad or unfortunate choices have consequences.

Example: Adventurers are a curious lot by definition, but nosy strangers aren't necessarily welcome... if the heroes wander across Lake-town asking questions, their inquisitiveness might be noticed: the new Master of the town orders that their reasons to be in the city be known, and sends six guards led by a captain to find out. Barring a hostile confrontation, the group will have to convince the captain of their good intentions, or spend some days in jail...

Tip for new Loremasters

Your players might make a mess of the meeting with Glóin, or even bypass him completely. If this happens, you can either continue your game in the direction that the players are taking it, or provide more of an incentive for them to join in the search, possibly finding a link to the backstory of one or more characters. Perhaps Balin is rumoured to know the whereabouts of a treasured family heirloom belonging to one of the characters, or perhaps he possesses information that the company needs. Consider what would give any or all of the characters a personal stake in finding the missing Dwarves. While the renown to be gained from the performance of good deeds should be reward enough for heroes of Middle-earth, sometimes players need an extra nudge...

Part Two
A Long and Weary Way

Considering the information the company has likely gathered so far and the nature of the mission, the adventurers should sooner or later embark on a journey south to find the missing Dwarves. The Loremaster may present this part of the adventure using the standard rules for journeys. The part opens with a preliminary stage of planning, followed by the standard journey resolution phase.

The Journey South

If the companions decide to follow Glóin's intended route they will enter the Long Marshes, trying to reach the point where the Old Forest Road exits Mirkwood and encounters the Running River. It is a long and treacherous

trek to cover on foot, as it goes across swamps and bogs for approximately eighty miles. Going the distance on a boat should be much safer, as the river waters run hurriedly south.

- Based on the journey rules, the travelling distance on foot from Esgaroth to where the Old Forest Road leaves the eastern borders of Mirkwood requires eight days of march and two Fatigue tests from each player.
- If the company will be travelling on boats downriver, it will take them four days, and require one Fatigue test from each player.
- If the Loremaster wants to make his players' lives a little bit harder, he may account for the fact that the area is a Shadow land, and requiring that the difficulty for all rolls be set to TN 16 (*hard*).

Planning the Route

Armed with this information, the players might want to reduce their risk by studying their chosen route: as stated, on page 151, all players may attempt a **Lore** roll to study the route and gain bonus Success dice based on their knowledge of the area. As a consequence of their planning the Journey might make for safer or less tiresome progress.

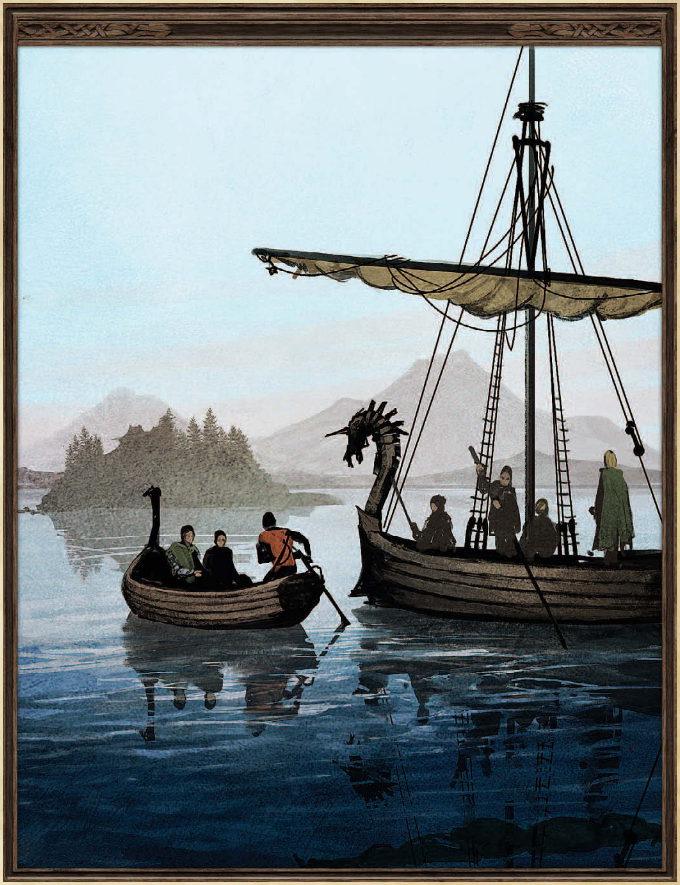
Finding Boats

The adventurers may obtain one or more boats in Esgaroth, by showing the Lake-men the papers given to them by Glóin, or by paying for their use if they can afford to do so (according to their Standard of Living).

- The boats that are available in Lake-town are wooden, round-bottomed skiffs allowing for two, four or eight rear-facing oarsmen, led by a coxswain coordinating their efforts and steering the boat with a side rudder. Typically, lake-town skiffs sport bird-headed prows, with swans being the traditional choice. In recent years, dragon-prowed skiffs have become popular with the more daring young Lake-men.

A player-hero may manoeuvre a skiff using his **Athletics** skill (and may benefit from possessing the **Boating** Trait).

As far as the standard rules for Journeys are concerned, this is a duty that should be entrusted to the guide of the company.



Fatigue Tests Resolution

When the planning stage is over, the players decide how the company travels south, and the Loremaster then narrates what they see and experience along the way.

- When the Loremaster considers it appropriate, he asks his players to resolve the Fatigue tests required by the Journey rules and records their outcome, to later apply any penalties, or any Hazard sequence triggered by rolling an Eye. If the gameplay follows the adventure as it is presented here, the Loremaster should probably apply the effects of failed Fatigue rolls right before the third part of the adventure starts.

Page 161 contains descriptions of several potentially dangerous episodes to be used if one or more Hazard sequences have been triggered: the Loremaster should

pick the ones he considers to be most appropriate to the character's current circumstances.

Exploring Middle-earth

The following paragraphs describe the itinerary that the company is likely to follow when retracing the road taken by the two missing Dwarves, and present a number of events set to challenge the group of players. The text assumes that the player-heroes choose to go boating along the Running River.

From Esgaroth to the Stair of Girion

It takes a day to cover the fifteen miles that separate Lake-town from the southern end of the lake, close to where its waters pour out over high waterfalls (their loud roar can be heard slowly increasing in volume as the adventurers get nearer to the falls). Travellers going south usually disembark on the western shore of the lake, where several wooden piers jut out from the shingles. There, a number of huts huddle close to the lake and fires can be seen twinkling in the dark at night. These are the homes of the Lake-men that sometimes serve as porters for the Stair of Girion.

- The Stair of Girion is a paved portage trackway, built long ago by the Lake-men with the help of Dwarven masons, allowing for the swift transport of boats and their contents from the lake down to where the Running River resumes its course beyond the falls (or up to the lake from the river, for boats coming from the south). Entire boats can be loaded on wheeled carts, that are then pulled along grooves dug into the paved trackway.

The Stair of Girion hasn't seen a lot of traffic in the past few centuries. Not even the death of Smaug has provided the chance to put it to much use, as only well-armed and courageous merchants (a rare breed...) dare to approach the lake directly by boat. Fearing to enter the darkest parts of the Long Marshes, they prefer to unload their wares 90 miles south of the lake, where the Running River enters Mirkwood and the marshes, and then continue their journey overland along the eastern borders of Mirkwood (see Map 1).

The Lake-men Huts

If they arrive at the Stair at the end of the first day of their journey, the adventurers will probably load their light boat (or boats) on the trackway to proceed south the next morning. This will probably force the adventurers to camp close to the lake shore, or ask for seats around a fire with the Lake-men.

The porters are young and simple men; they are easily excited by the sight of adventurers daring to go south on a boat, and might jump at the chance of hearing a good story or a song of the old days. If the adventurers are gracious enough to mingle with the Lake-men and to indulge in their thirst for adventurous tales, the young porters have a way to reward the heroes for their kindness:

- If any companion makes a roll using any Custom skill to entertain the Lake-men, they introduce the company to an ancient-looking individual, old Nerulf: the decrepit Northman is hardly intelligible when he speaks, but when told that the companions are heading south he repeats over and over again what seems some words of warning or rhyme of lore he learnt when he was a child: "If you go south in the marshes take heed: tread lightly and fear the gallows-weed..."

Into the Long Marshes

Beyond the Stair of Girion, the company will be rowing south in the Long Marshes, an area considered to this day to be mostly unexplored and dangerous, shunned even by the most curious of lake-men and raft-elves. The terrain along the river vale is flat and fenny, and a dense fog often rises in the morning, making it almost impossible to follow a path on land. Boating on the river makes for a steady progress, even if the stream becomes tortuous and sometimes wanders among a hundred winding courses. The river waters are faster in spring than in other periods of the year, as the ice melts in the distant mountains.

Entering Mirkwood

Approximately 25 miles south from the lake, the river enters the eastern eaves of Mirkwood. The shadowy canopy of the wood seems to silence the sounds of nature, from the buzzing of insects to the chirping of birds.

- The part of the Long Marshes that is inside Mirkwood qualifies as a blighted place. As the region is a Shadow land, all companions must pass a Corruption test every day or gain a Shadow point. The Loremaster should emphasise the oppressive, depressing nature of the place, that makes them question why they set out on their mission.

Navigating the Marshes

The Loremaster may refer to the following guidelines as he looks for ways to bring to life the perils of travelling through unfamiliar territory.

- As the company enters the marshes, boating becomes more difficult, as dangling branches and submerged roots make for unexpected obstacles: the character steering the boat (the *Guide*) is required to make an **Athletics** test every day. Failure to pass a test results in all companions losing 3 Endurance points, as they must enter the cold waters of the marshes to free their boat from where it gets stuck in mud, or in a tangle of dead boughs.
- Any hero acting as *Look-out* for the company should be allowed two **Awareness** rolls every day. A great success is required to notice that the company is being followed, while an extraordinary success identifies the pursuers as a group of Wood Elves (see By Order of the Elvenking below).
- All heroes acting as *scouts* can be allowed two rolls every day, using **Explore** or **Search**, to look for signs of the passage of Balin. Exploring the marshes is handled as a prolonged action (see page 149) requiring four successful rolls to be completed. When four rolls have been made successfully, the companions are considered to be following a path that will eventually lead them to Balin's last encampment (see *Balin's Camp* below).

By Orders of the Elvenking

The companions stop being alone as soon as they enter Mirkwood: a group of four Wood Elves is quietly following them. They tread silently along the western riverbank, on hidden paths that only they know and see, sometimes leaving the ground to continue their progress from tree to tree. They are following orders issued by the Elvenking, who sent them to watch the area where the eastern borders of his realm meet the Long Marshes.

If the Elves are discovered (by a Look-out Man noticing them, for example) they can be approached. Otherwise,

they keep following the company with the intention of discovering more about their errand (see below).

Encountering Galion

The group of Elves is led by Galion, a former cupbearer (butler) of the King consigned to patrol duty for drunkenness since the famous escape of a group of Dwarves from the royal halls. His presence complicates communications a bit, as he doesn't like strangers and despises Dwarves (and Hobbits!) as he blames them for his current situation.

- Galion is impressed more by Valour than Wisdom. He is prejudiced against Dwarves and Hobbits (-1 to Tolerance if the company features Dwarves or Hobbits; -2 if both)

The information contained in the following paragraph can be used by the Loremaster to run an encounter between two conflicting sides: the Elves that want to discover what the adventurers are up to, and the company looking for Balin.

What the Elves Know

Galion wants to discover what the recent traffic on the river is due to. A few days ago, they were keeping an eye on Balin and Óin, as the two emissaries were heading south on a small boat. The Elves followed them for many miles, until one night the two Dwarves simply disappeared from their encampment. Galion thinks that they might have discovered that they were being followed and chose to sneak away quietly: he didn't enquire further and returned, as these parts of the marshes are too close to the Mountains of Mirkwood for him to tarry for too long.

- If the encounter proceeds well, the Elves might be persuaded to lead the company to where Balin made camp before disappearing (see Balin's Camp below). The players might need more than a few good rolls, as Galion wants information in exchange for information.

- If the companions fail enough rolls to exceed the Tolerance rating set for the encounter, it is possible that Galion has been made suspicious by the behaviour of the heroes. Maybe they mentioned that they are looking for Balin, one of the Dwarves that Galion considers responsible for his current misfortune? Whatever the reason, if the Loremaster considers that the encounter has ended on a sour note, the Wood Elves leave the company for good and disappear into the forest without offering their help.

Balin's Camp

The company will discover where Balin made his last camp if they are led there by Galion, or if they were following the right leads (they completed the prolonged action needed to explore the marshes): it is a patch of dry land rising to the west of the river course, a few miles north of where a stream descends from the Mountains of Mirkwood to join the River Running (the Rotting River, a brook of dark and muddy waters, mostly avoided by the Elves as it exudes a putrescent reek even in the coldest months of the year). It will probably take most of the second day of travel in the marshes for them to get there, just in time to have a look around before darkness falls.

- If the companions have a look around and succeed in a Search roll, they find traces of the days-old encampment. A great success indicates that the two Dwarves set up the camp but didn't sleep there, while an extraordinary result discovers a box tucked in a rotten stump and protected by *spells of secrecy*, cut hastily but efficaciously on the bark of the tree (if the searching character is a Dwarf, it only takes a normal success to find the spell-protected box).

The box is a small ivory jewel case, with intricately carven images of regal-looking birds: the Great Eagles of the Misty Mountains. The box contains a written and illuminated parchment, King Dáin's letter to the King of the Eagles. The letter is rolled and wound about by a fine necklace of twisted gold wire, holding a magnificent precious stone of a snowy colour the size of a small fist: when the box is first opened, any surrounding light is caught and multiplied by the jewel's countless facets, making the box shine as if it contained an inner light. It is a lordly gift, intended to pass from one king to another.

- As the stone comes from the hoard of Smaug, the Dragon's wickedness still lingers upon it: when they first lay their eyes on it, all heroes must pass a Corruption test or gain a Shadow point, as a fierce desire is kindled in their hearts.

When the site of Balin's camp has been searched, it is time to consider what to do next. If the company arrived here at the end of the second day, the adventurers will most likely have to stop for the night before they can proceed further.

The Stone-Troll

The Loremaster may use this encounter as a nasty Hazard episode, or if he feels the need to raise the danger level of the adventure. The encounter takes place necessarily at night, as the Stone-Troll sleeps during the day.

Many years ago a large Stone-Troll descended from his lair in the foothills of the Mountains of Mirkwood to dwell in the Long Marshes. His wit has been dulled by years of solitude, and he has lost any ability to speak in a comprehensible fashion (but his hunger has grown accordingly). He has taken to lying in wait close to a stinking pool of stagnant water, crouching under the surface among the reeds.

At night, the pool is lit up by a prodigious number of ghostly wisps of flame, or corpse candles, which seem to attract animals or other sorts of food for the Troll.

These flickering lights might be noticed by the companions as they set up for the night, or by a hero keeping watch over the camp. If the stinking pool is approached, the Stone-Troll emerges from his hiding place and attacks.

- The combat encounter should be set up as an ambush against the companions (see page 167) and thus require a roll from all heroes to avoid being surprised. If any hero is surprised by the Troll, in addition to the normal consequences of being surprised he must pass a Fear test or find himself unable to invoke an Attribute bonus for as long as the character faces the monster.

Stone-Troll:

Attribute Level	
6	
Endurance	**Hate**
60*	3*
Parry	**Armour**
5	3d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 1
Movement, 2	Custom, 1
Perception, 1	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Club	3
Crush	1
Special Abilities	
Great Size*	Hatred (Dwarves)
Horrible Strength	

Stone-Troll Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Club	6	10	14	-
Crush	Attribute Level	👁	12	-

Notes

Club: *A Troll club can be anything, from a stout branch ripped from a tree, to a body part torn from a fallen enemy.*

Crush: *Weaponless trolls use their weight and strength to pound relentlessly upon their enemies.*

*The Troll has been weakened by his meagre hunts (his Endurance and Hate ratings are slightly less than normal for a member of this fell race) but a Stone-Troll remains a formidable opponent. The Loremaster may further reduce his effectiveness by considering him to be already wounded.

If they defeat the Troll, the companions will discover and possibly inspect his previous injury: a cut inflicted by an axe (was it Balin's?).

Part Three
Beside the Rotting River

The third and final part of the adventure starts when the adventurers finally get near the lair of the Marsh-dwellers, where the river meets the Old Forest Road (probably on the fourth day since they left Esgaroth). Here a town of Men once thrived, a waystation for travelling Dwarves coming from or going to the Iron Hills and merchants from the South and East. When the power of the northern Kings waned, the town was abandoned, until the marshes and the forest swallowed its ruins, together with any trace of its existence.

The Wood of Hanging Trees

Beyond the Rotting River, the water course breaks against tangles of hoary willow-trees standing close together and shutting out the light of day even at its brightest. Their drooping branches trail into the water, and their moulding roots sink deep into the grey slime: the river disappears in a vast fen without wind or tide.

- At this point of the adventure, the heroes will be actively trying to find Balin and Óin. The Loremaster should ask the players how they intend to proceed. If they intend to comb the area, the adventurers will probably be forced to leave their boat (or boats) and advance knee-deep in the water (for some, waist-high...).

Scouting the marsh beyond the Rotting River can be translated into another prolonged action requiring at least a total of six successful rolls. Heroes acting as scouts may choose from Explore or Search. For every two successful rolls, the Loremaster may pick one of the following clues and reveal it to his players as the result of their search:

- *A wrecked boat.* The searching adventurers find the small boat used by Balin and Óin. It has sunk under the marshy waters, but is visible from the surface as the water is just a few feet deep. It looks damaged, as if something slashed at it with fangs or claws. There are no signs of the two missing Dwarves.
- *Ancient bones.* Several stretches of the marsh are strewn with bones of differing ages. The remains belong to animals and men (victims of the Marsh-dwellers).
- *Ruins.* The last vestiges of the ancient town jut out from the slime and the mud, like stubbed fingers and broken teeth. Lonely pillars, small marble arches, and wet walls with grinning gargoyles stare at the unexpected visitors.

When the adventurers accumulate a total of six successful rolls, they will have found their way to the dark pool (see The Marsh-bell, below). In the meantime, two main menaces lurk in this rotting wood, posing a challenge that introduces the climax of the story.

Gallows-weed

A sinister tree-hanging plant, gallows-weed can prove dangerous to adventurers exploring the marshes or sleeping in the open. It coils itself around a victim's neck like a snake, and then pulls up to strangle him. All companions actively searching for the missing Dwarves may be attacked by the dangerous plant, as their actions are exposing them to the threat as they pass under drooping branches. More than one adventurer may be attacked at approximately the same time (gallows-weed are a one-shot threat, as once attacked, the adventurers aren't likely to get surprised again).

- The chosen victims are allowed to make an **Awareness** test, as the plant slithers around their neck to attack. On a failure, they are seized and pulled from the ground, toward the tree branch from which the weed is hanging.

The character immediately loses a number of Endurance points equal to half his Fatigue score. If the character doesn't pass out, he may free himself by succeeding in a roll of **Athletics**; on a failed roll he loses another three points of Endurance and must try again.

- Another companion may try to cut free the victim of a gallows-weed. All attacks hit automatically, but the character rolls the dice anyway to determine the quality of the success: the victim is freed on a great or extraordinary success (ignore Endurance losses).

Nerulf's Warning

If a player remembers the rhyme of lore recited by the old lake-man as the company explores the Wood of Hanging Trees and explicitly mentions that the companions are looking for 'gallows-weed', then they may be allowed a roll of Search to spot plants that may fit the description.

- On a successful roll the companions are able to stay clear of the hanging plants and are not subjected to their attacks.

Gore-crows

A breed of crows twisted by long years spent in the shadow of the Mountains of Mirkwood, Gore-crows are servitors of the Marsh-dwellers. They look like small-sized ravens with a greenish sheen to their feathers.

- When they explore the woods, any look-out and huntsman in the company is allowed a **Hunting** roll to notice their presence. The Gore-crows stand motionless, as if sleeping, on the highest willow-tree branches.

These gloomy birds act as alarms for their underground overlords, and they start croaking when intruders get too close to their lair (see The Marsh-bell below). Gore-crows are roused from their apparent slumber only when they spot shiny things, like jewels or other precious items.

- If the players make the mistake of exposing the stone of Dáin in the open, the Gore crows immediately try to steal it. They silently glide one after the other, making a sweeping attempt at snatching the necklace in their beaks or claws. If the company hasn't noticed the Gore-crows yet, then the thieving birds succeed automatically and fly away with their prize. Otherwise, the character holding the necklace avoids the attack by succeeding in an **Awareness** test.

Heroes trying to shoot down a Gore-crow in flight using a bow may make a roll using their weapon skill against a severe difficulty (TN 18). If the roll is successful, the bird drops anything it was trying to steal and then flies away — on a great or extraordinary success, the bird is skewered through by the arrow and is killed. Gore-crows are too small and quick to be hit with a thrown spear.

The Marsh-bell

Sooner or later the adventurers find their way to a deep pool of dark water. Here the ruins are more prominent, as if this was the place where the main buildings of the sunken town once rose. The remains of a great marble arch can be seen on the distant shore, still holding a massive wooden gate, the other walls of the building now crumbled into the mud. On the treetops around the pool the Gore-crows croak, signalling the presence of the trespassers.

After a while, all companions start to hear the slow and soft ringing of a bell: it seems distant and remote, as if coming from under the ground:

- All heroes who hear the bell must make a Wisdom test. If a hero fails the test, he gains a Shadow point and enters the pool, walking towards its centre as if in a daze. If the Shadow point makes a character Miserable (or the hero was Miserable already), he is completely transfixed and disappears under the dark waters before other companions may stop him (as if he keeps behaving normally until the very last moment).

A companion may stop a dazed adventurer by tackling him, making a roll of Athletics against a TN equal to 10 plus the target's Body score.

All companions who failed the Wisdom test and were not prevented from entering the pool wake up some time later, completely soaked and lying at the top of some crumbling steps leading from a water-logged tunnel into a stony chamber.

- Characters who failed the roll and got transfixed are here too, trapped in a sorcerous sleep from which there is no natural waking. They can be roused by calling them back with a successful roll of **Song** (something that might occur to a hero succeeding in a Lore test, if nobody proposes it before).

Heroes who resisted the call of the bell and enter the cold waters voluntarily discover that an underwater opening leads to the same underground chamber. This chamber is part of the complex of mouldy cellars of a once-proud palace of Men.

Players might well be wary of entering the pool. Rolls of **Explore** or **Search** reveal that the Dwarves' tracks lead to the pool and do not leave it.

The Lair of the Marsh-dwellers

Map 2 on page 300 shows the disposition of the cellars below the ruins. There lurk the Marsh-dwellers, a horrible race of treasure-hoarding humanoid monsters. They are responsible for the disappearance of Balin and Óin, but have been robbed of their prey by the cunning of the two Dwarves, who were able to shut themselves in an empty room. They will try to get even by not letting the adventurers return to the surface with their lives...

The underground complex reeks of dying and rotting things. It is dark, dank and cold, its stone floor invariably covered by a film of stagnant water. The Loremaster can use the locations described below to set the stage for the conclusive episode of this adventure.

1. Flooded Chamber

This is the room where the victims of the Marsh-bell go in their sleep-like daze. It can be reached by waking heroes by entering the pool, and then just walking or swimming underwater for a few yards to an opening on the pool side. The opening leads to a short passage that emerges in the half-flooded chamber. The room is completely devoid of any features, barring wet stone walls and a dark doorway leading to the main cellar.

2. Main Cellar

This is a vast vaulted chamber, presenting six arched openings, three on the right side and three on the left (leading to several smaller cellars). The farthest doorway on the right side is larger, its arch decorated with stones of many colours (leading to the wine cellar).

In the wall opposite the opening to the flooded cellar, there is a narrow vertical chimney, leading to the surface (a faint breeze can be felt if someone sticks his head into the chimney); inside the chimney hangs a bell rope, that if pulled rings a dull-sounding bell (attracting Marsh-dwellers, see page 299). The floor inside the confined space of the chimney is littered with gore crow feathers and bird deposits.

- If the Gore-crows succeeded in stealing the stone of Dáin, it can be found here, hidden among the dirt.

3. The Cells

The four passages that exit the main cellar lead to several cells, once used to store goods and wines, and today serving as the Marsh-dwellers' resting places. Most cells appear as no more than wet, dirty holes, filled with waste and food scrapes.

Any adventurer entering these passages and forced to fight will be considered to be in cramped quarters. Additionally, ranged weapons cannot be used here.

4. Wine Cellar

The decorated archway that opens in the main cellar leads to a short flight of marble steps descending into the darkness. At the end of it, a reinforced door defaced by claw marks is found. Beyond the door is the wine cellar, a wide room with a low ceiling resting on short, stocky pillars.

- Balin and Óin found refuge here when they were trapped by the Marsh-bell. If the adventurers arrive here, the two Dwarves open the door (it was closed from the inside) and thank their saviours with what strength is left in their body: they haven't had any food or water since the day they arrived here.

When freed, the two Dwarves will insist upon leaving. In their present condition, they are not of any help to the company and will have to be protected if a fight breaks out.

5. Treasure Chamber

The first doorway to the left of the flooded chamber leads to a tight and twisting passage that suddenly opens into a wider semicircular room. Here, a great wooden gate is set into the stone wall. The foul stench that permeates every inch of the underground complex here is almost overpowering. The gate is not locked, and the great wooden door can be pulled open with some effort, its hinges creaking noisily. Beyond the gate is a great natural cave, the treasure chamber of the Marsh-dwellers: on the irregular floor sits a huge heap of polished gold coins and other shining objects, like silver table knives, cups and dishes, lamps and candlesticks. A warm, shivering glow seems to radiate from the hoard of the Marsh-dwellers, as if the gold had been enchanted by the long brooding of the greedy creatures.

- All heroes entering the chamber must pass a Corruption check or be captivated by the sight of the hoard: if a hero fails the roll he falls to his knees, dazed by the sight of the silver and gold.

All companions failing the roll are considered to be surprised when the Marsh-dwellers attack (see below).

The Marsh-dwellers Approach

Some moments later, the gold brilliance that permeates the chamber seems to multiply as a hundred tiny mirrors start to flicker in the darkness: the eyes of a horde of Marsh-dwellers slowly creeping towards the adventurers from all directions. If the heroes do not retreat immediately beyond the gate (possibly trying to shut it behind them) they must fight against the approaching horde.

- Companions standing their ground against the Marsh-dwellers are immediately outnumbered three to one, with their backs against the gateway. Whenever a creature is felled by a hero, another one takes its place. A companion dazed by the hoard is surprised by the attack (see page 167).

If the heroes succeed in killing at least a dozen of Marsh-dwellers without suffering grave consequences, the creatures seem to pause momentarily in their onslaught, leaving the companions some time to reflect – but in a handful of moments, the shining eyes in the dark multiply, as the creatures tighten their ranks for a crushing assault.

If the companions do not take this last chance to flee (maybe to grab some of the gold lying on the floor...) they will be relentlessly attacked by the Marsh-dwellers that now will stop only when all the companions are dead (from now on, the heroes may only leave the fight by attempting to Escape Combat – see page 180)

The Loremaster can warn the players that there seem to be too many creatures for them to have any reasonable chance of defeating all of them in combat. If that doesn't work, remind them that they are on a rescue mission and getting the Dwarves out should be their priority.

The Gold of the Marsh-dwellers

There probably isn't any time for the companions to grab a meaningful share of the hoard of the Marsh-dwellers, but if the players come up with an interesting plot to get hold of some of the gold, the Loremaster might allow them to take away the equivalent of a point or two of Treasure each.

The Marsh-dwellers

The underground cellars are the realm of the Marsh-dwellers. Here they try to lure their victims, to then kill and feed upon them. Every valuable is then stripped from their bodies and brought to the Treasure chamber. They appear as shambling humanoid creatures with clammy pale flesh, like that of a corpse left to rot in the water. They move slowly and quietly, leaving behind wet footprints with their bare feet. A fell light in their small eyes suggests a wicked vitality and intent.

At least six Marsh-dwellers prowl the various cellars at all times, but another dozen or so emerges from the Treasure chamber if the bell is rung (see the entry for the Main Cellar, on page 297). If the adventurers find the Treasure chamber and are foolish enough to attack the innumerable monsters, the Loremaster may stage their final and stupidly heroic last stand. If the adventurers prove to be of a wiser sort, they will attempt to save the Dwarves and themselves and find a way out.

Common Weapons

The Marsh-dwellers attack by biting their victims, or try to injure them with their unclean claws.

Marsh-dwellers' Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	4	👁	12	-
Claws	5	👁	16	-

Notes

Bite: *A Marsh-dweller's bite is weak in comparison to that of other malevolent creatures, but its hunger makes it a dangerous opponent nonetheless.*

Claws: *The claws of a Marsh-dweller are hard and almost razor-sharp. Luckily, the creatures are often too slow and clumsy to use them to good effect.*

Marsh-dweller:

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	**Hate**
10	2
Parry	**Armour**
4	3d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 2
Movement, 1	Custom, 1
Perception, 1	Vocation, 0
Weapon Skills	
Bite	2
Claws	1
Special Abilities	
Hate Sunlight	Foul Reek

Aftermath

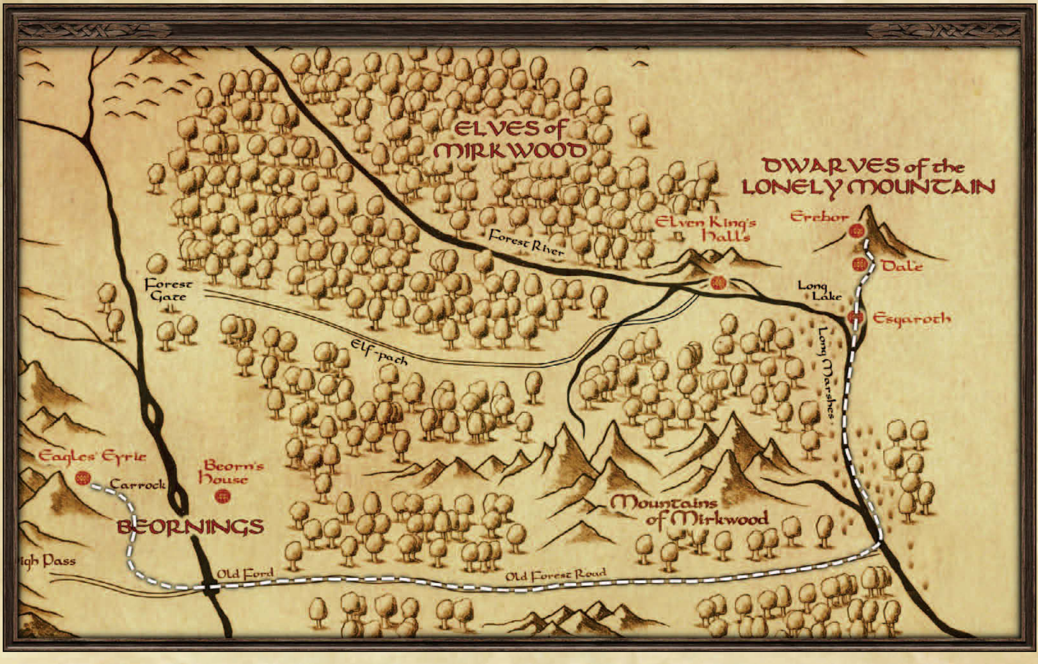
If Balin and Óin have been rescued from their fate, the company will probably head north to return to Esgaroth, unless the gameplay has led to unexpected developments.

The return trip may be summarised by the Loremaster or narrated in detail.

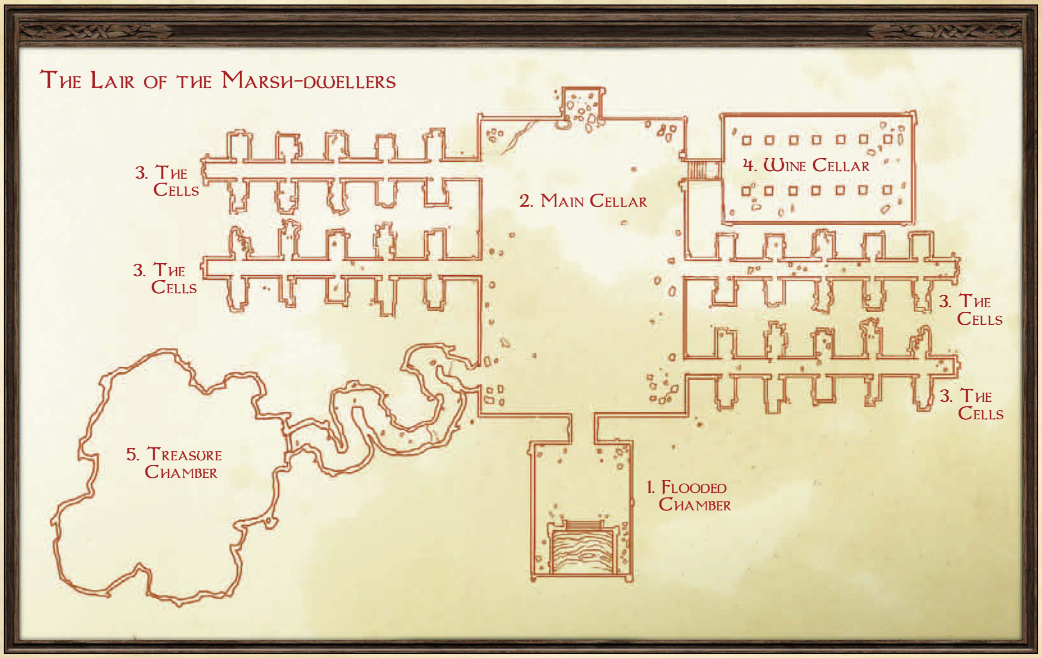
- It will take the company 8 days and 2 Fatigue tests to return to Lake-town, as the heroes will be rowing upriver this time.

When they finally find their way to Esgaroth with the two Dwarves, the adventurers will be received triumphantly. Glóin will meet them aboard the great gilded boat of the Master of the town as they make their way across the lake, ready to award them with their prize.

Map 1



Map 2



- Appendix -

Pre-generated Character Sheets

- Bardings -

Lifstan, son of Leiknir

Your father was a smith. When you were a child, the sound of the hammer ringing in his forge was as music to your ears. One day, when the city of Dale was finally rebuilt and the entrance to the Lonely Mountain opened once again, your father brought you to see the forges of the Mountain-folk. There, you have seen the work of the dwarf-smiths of old, a treasure beyond what your imagination could dream up.

From that day you haven't stopped thinking about the vast hoards that lie unmolested in deep places beneath the mountains...

The One Ring™

Name: Lifstan, son of Leiknir

Culture: Barding

Standard of Living: Prosperous

Cultural Blessing: Stout-hearted (roll Feat die twice and pick best for Valour rolls)

Calling: Treasure-hunter

Shadow weakness Dragon-sickness

Experience — Total:

Valour: 2

Wisdom: 1

- TRAITS -

Specialities: old-lore, smith-craft

Distinctive Features: adventurous, burglary, hardy

- ATTRIBUTES -

Attribute	Rating	Favoured
Body	5	7
Heart	7	8
Wits	2	5

- COMMON SKILLS -

Skill	Rating	Skill	Rating	Skill	Rating
Awe	■□□□□□	*Inspire*	■■■□□□	*Persuade*	■■■□□□
Athletics	□□□□□□	*Travel*	■■□□□□	*Stealth*	■■□□□□
Awareness	□□□□□□	*Insight*	■■□□□□	*Search*	■■□□□□
Explore	■■□□□□	*Healing*	□□□□□□	*Hunting*	□□□□□□
Song	■□□□□□	*Courtesy*	■■□□□□	*Riddle*	□□□□□□
Craft	■■□□□□	*Battle*	■■□□□□	*Lore*	■□□□□□

- SKILL GROUPS -

Group	Rating
personality	☆☆☆
movement	☆☆☆
perception	☆☆☆
survival	☆☆☆
custom	☆☆☆
vocation	☆☆☆

- WEAPON SKILLS -

Weapon	Rating	Weapon	Rating	Weapon	Rating
(Swords)	■■□□□□	Spear	■□□□□□	Dagger	■□□□□□
________	□□□□□□	________	□□□□□□	________	□□□□□□

Damage: 5 — Ranged:

Parry: 2 — Shield: +3

Armour: 3d — Head gear:

- REWARDS -

Tower Shield
(+2 parry bonus against ranged attacks)

- VIRTUES -

- GEAR -

weapon	damage	edge	injury	enc
(Swords)	5	10	16	2
Spear	5	9	14	2
Dagger	3	ᚠ	12	0

	Item	enc
armour:	Mail-shirt	12
headgear:		
shield:	Great Shield	5

Endurance — Rating: 29 — Fatigue: 21

Hope — Rating: 15 — Shadow:

Weary ◯

Miserable ◯

Wounded ◯

- Beornings -

Beran of the Mountains

You were born into a family of shepherds and hunters near the eastern edge of the Misty Mountains. Since you were a child you felt a great fascination for the high and snowy peaks, and spent most of your time climbing and looking for new paths over the mountains. After you met Beorn and embraced his cause, you chose to protect any friendly traveller that finds himself journeying through the mountain passes in these times of growing peril.

The One Ring™

Name: Beran of the Mountains

Culture: Beorning — **Standard of Living:** Martial

Cultural Blessing: Furious (ignores the effects of Weariness when Wounded)

Calling: Warden — **Shadow weakness** Lure of Power

Experience — Total:

Valour: 2

Wisdom: 1

- TRAITS -

Specialities: Anduin-lore, mountaineer

Distinctive Features: grim, Shadow-lore, trusty

- ATTRIBUTES -

Attribute	Rating	Favoured
Body	6	9
Heart	4	5
Wits	4	6

- COMMON SKILLS -

Skill	Rank	Skill	Rank	Skill	Rank
Awe	■■■□□□	Inspire	■□□□□□	Persuade	■■□□□□
Athletics	■■□□□□	Travel	■□□□□□	Stealth	■□□□□□
Awareness	■■□□□□	Insight	■■■□□□	Search	■□□□□□
Explore	■■□□□□	Healing	■□□□□□	Hunting	■■■□□□
Song	■□□□□□	Courtesy	□□□□□□	Riddle	■□□□□□
Craft	■□□□□□	Battle	■□□□□□	Lore	□□□□□□

- SKILL GROUPS -

personality ☆☆☆
movement ☆☆☆
perception ☆☆☆
survival ☆☆☆
custom ☆☆☆
vocation ☆☆☆

- WEAPON SKILLS -

Weapon	Rank	Weapon	Rank	Weapon	Rank
(Axes)	■■□□□□	Spear	■□□□□□	Dagger	■□□□□□
________	□□□□□□	________	□□□□□□	________	□□□□□□

Damage: 6 — Ranged:

Parry: 4 — Shield:

Armour: 2d — Head gear:

- REWARDS -

Splitting Axe
(If roll a ᚠ on the Feat die, the target rolls one Success die less for its Protection test)

- VIRTUES -

- GEAR -

Weapon	Damage	Edge	Injury	Enc
(Axes)	9	ᚠ	20	4
Spear	5	9	14	2
Dagger	3	ᚠ	12	0

armour: Leather Corset — enc 8
headgear: — enc
shield: — enc

Endurance — Rating 28 — Fatigue 14

Hope — Rating 12 — Shadow

Weary ◯
Miserable ◯
Wounded ◯

- Dwarves -
of the
Lonely Mountain

Beli

When you were a child, your father went north to find the hoard of an ancient Dragon and never returned. In his absence, you honed your skills preparing to follow him on the road to adventure and now you think the day has arrived to take up the challenge: you are clever, well-equipped and without fear - you are ready to go and seek what secret treasures are still hidden in the remote corners of the world.

The One Ring™

Name: Beli

Culture: Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain — **Standard of Living:** Rich

Cultural Blessing: Redoubtable (subtract favoured Heart to final Fatigue rating)

Calling: Treasure-hunter — **Shadow weakness** Dragon-sickness

Experience — Total:

Valour 1

Wisdom 2

- TRAITS -

Specialities: fire-making, tunnelling

Distinctive Features: burglary, cunning, suspicious

- ATTRIBUTES -

Attribute	Rating	Favoured
Body	6	8
Heart	3	6
Wits	5	6

- COMMON SKILLS -

Skill	Rank	Skill	Rank	Skill	Rank
Awe	0	Inspire	2	Persuade	0
Athletics	1	Travel	3	Stealth	0
Awareness	1	Insight	0	Search	3
Explore	2	Healing	0	Hunting	0
Song	3	Courtesy	1	Riddle	2
Craft	3	Battle	2	Lore	0

- SKILL GROUPS -

personality, movement, perception, survival, custom, vocation

- WEAPON SKILLS -

Weapon	Rank
Mattock	2
Short sword	1
Dagger	1

Damage 6 — Ranged:

Parry 5 — Shield:

Armour 4d — Head gear: +4

- REWARDS -

- VIRTUES -

Confidence (+2 Hope)

- GEAR -

weapon	damage	edge	injury	enc
Mattock	8	10	18	3
Short sword	5	10	14	1
Dagger	3	ᚹ	12	0

		enc
armour:	Coat of mail	16
headgear:	Helm	6
shield:		

Endurance — Rating: 31 — Fatigue: 20

Hope — Rating: 11 — Shadow:

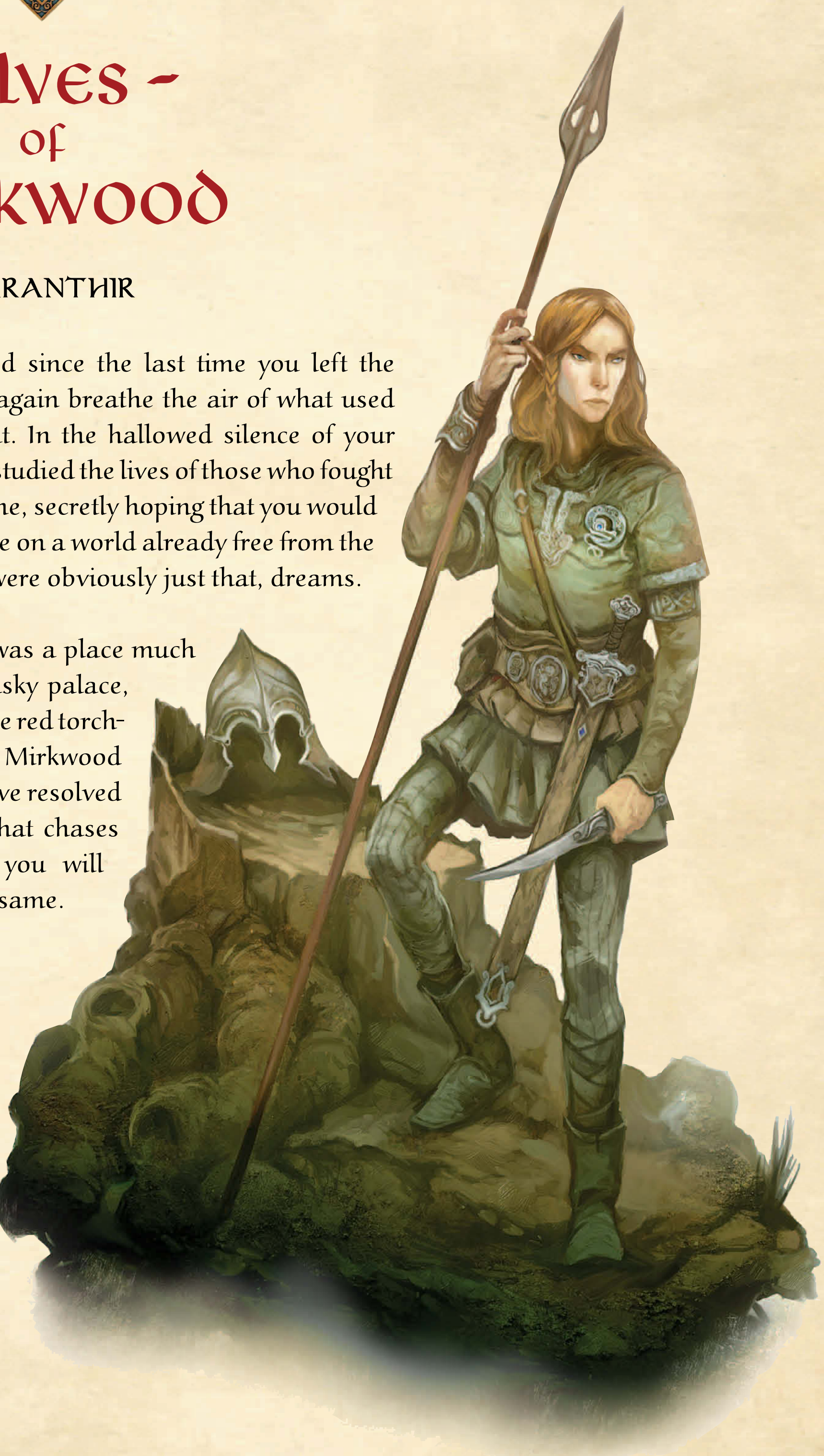
Weary ◯ **Miserable** ◯ **Wounded** ◯

- Elves - of Mirkwood

Caranthir

Many decades have passed since the last time you left the halls of your King to once again breathe the air of what used to be Greenwood the Great. In the hallowed silence of your underground dwelling you studied the lives of those who fought the darkness before your time, secretly hoping that you would return to see the Moon wane on a world already free from the Shadow. But your dreams were obviously just that, dreams.

What was waiting for you was a place much darker than your King's dusky palace, and it will take more than the red torch-light of your folk to cleanse Mirkwood once and for all. But you have resolved that you can be the light that chases away the shadows, and you will teach others how to do the same.



The One Ring™

Name: Caranthir

Culture: Elves of Mirkwood

Standard of Living: Martial

Cultural Blessing: Folk of the Dusk (advantage at night, underground and when in woods)

Calling: Scholar

Shadow weakness Lure of Secrets

Experience — Total:

Valour: 2

Wisdom: 1

- TRAITS -

Specialities: Elven-lore, Mirkwood-lore

Distinctive Features: Rhymes of Lore, secretive, quick of hearing

- ATTRIBUTES -

Attribute	Rating	Favoured
Body	6	8
Heart	2	5
Wits	6	7

- COMMON SKILLS -

Skill	Rating	Skill	Rating	Skill	Rating
Awe	2	Inspire	0	Persuade	0
Athletics	3	Travel	0	Stealth	2
Awareness	3	Insight	2	Search	0
Explore	0	Healing	1	Hunting	1
Song	2	Courtesy	0	Riddle	1
Craft	0	Battle	3	Lore	3

- SKILL GROUPS -

personality ☆☆☆
movement ☆☆☆
perception ☆☆☆
survival ☆☆☆
custom ☆☆☆
vocation ☆☆☆

- WEAPON SKILLS -

Weapon	Rating
(Spears)	2
Sword	1
Dagger	1

Damage: 6 — Ranged:

Parry: 6 — Shield:

Armour: 1d — Head gear: +4

- REWARDS -

Great spear if fine make
(Keen, Edge -1 included above)

- VIRTUES -

- GEAR -

Weapon	damage	edge	injury	enc
(Spears)	9	8	16	4
Sword	5	10	16	2
Dagger	3	ᚹ	12	0

armour: Leather shirt — enc 4
headgear: Helm — enc 6
shield: — enc

Endurance — Rating: 24 — Fatigue: 16

Hope — Rating: 10 — Shadow:

Weary
Miserable
Wounded

- Hobbits - of the Shire

Trotter

You left your peaceful life in the Shire when you ran away to find Gandalf, the Conjuror, after he paid a visit to your family at your coming of age party. He tried to convince you to turn back, but as you stubbornly refused, he caught something in your eyes that convinced him to let you have your way. You spent many weeks with him, until he deemed you ready to find your own path.

The dreams you had in the Shire are now your plans for the future: you want to light your broken-stemmed pipe in the halls of Beorn the Shapeshifter and walk side by side with the Wizard Radagast in the fenced garth of Rhosgobel, you want to visit the royal palace of Dale and see the throne of the King under the Mountain.

The One Ring™

Name: Trotter

Culture: Hobbits of the Shire

Standard of Living: Prosperous

Cultural Blessing: Hobbit-sense (roll Feat die twice and pick best for Wisdom checks)

Calling: Wanderer

Shadow weakness: Wandering-madness

Experience — Total:

Valour: 1

Wisdom: 2

- TRAITS -

Specialities: smoking, story-telling

Distinctive Features: folk-lore, keen-eyed, true-hearted

- ATTRIBUTES -

Attribute	Rating	Favoured
Body	4	7
Heart	5	7
Wits	5	6

- COMMON SKILLS -

Skill	Rank	Skill	Rank	Skill	Rank
Awe	0	Inspire	0	Persuade	2
Athletics	1	Travel	3	Stealth	3
Awareness	2	Insight	1	Search	2
Explore	2	Healing	0	Hunting	0
Song	2	Courtesy	3	Riddle	2
Craft	0	Battle	0	Lore	1

- SKILL GROUPS -

personality
movement
perception
survival
custom
vocation

- WEAPON SKILLS -

Weapon	Rank
Bow	2
Short sword	1
Dagger	1

Damage: 4 — Ranged:

Parry: 5 — Shield: +1

Armour: 2d — Head gear:

- REWARDS -

- VIRTUES -

Tough in the Fibre (fast recovery)

- GEAR -

weapon	damage	edge	injury	enc
Bow	5	10	14	1
Short sword	5	10	14	1
Dagger	3	ᚠ	12	0

armour: Leather corset — enc 8

headgear: — enc

shield: Buckler — enc 1

Endurance — Rating: 21 — Fatigue: 11

Hope — Rating: 17 — Shadow:

Weary

Miserable

Wounded

- Woodmen - of Wilderland

The Bride

You were born west of the Great River, in one of the villages nearest the mountains. You were scarcely fifteen when you first saw him who would become your groom, at a folk-moot held at Mountain hall, in a time when the Orcs were sorely threatening your people. Only a few months later you moved across the river to be near him, as he was from the folk dwelling in the forest. As you waited for your wedding, you learned how to seek a prey among the trees, and your love for the hunt rivalled that for your future husband.

One night, only a handful of days before your wedding-day, he left with a company of men from the village, refusing to bring you with him and giving no explanations. Only his faithful hound returned, grievously wounded.

When the elders of the village saw the claw marks on the hound they shook their heads, speaking of the dreaded Beast of Mirkwood...

The One Ring™

Name: the Bride

Culture: Woodmen of Wilderland — **Standard of Living:** Frugal

Cultural Blessing: Woodcrafty (favoured Wits score as Parry when in woods)

Calling: Slayer — **Shadow weakness:** Curse of Vengeance

Experience — Total:

Valour: 1

Wisdom: 2

- TRAITS -

Specialities: beasts-lore, leech-craft

Distinctive Features: Enemy-lore (wolves), forthright, gruff

- ATTRIBUTES -

Attribute	Basic	Favoured
Body	3	6
Heart	4	5
Wits	7	9

- COMMON SKILLS -

Skill	Rank	Skill	Rank	Skill	Rank
Awe	3	Inspire	1	Persuade	0
Athletics	2	Travel	1	Stealth	2
Awareness	2	Insight	0	Search	0
Explore	3	Healing	3	Hunting	3
Song	1	Courtesy	0	Riddle	1
Craft	1	Battle	1	Lore	0

- SKILL GROUPS -

personality, movement, perception, survival, custom, vocation

- WEAPON SKILLS -

Weapon	Rank
Long-hafted axe	2
Spear	1
Dagger	1

Damage: 3 — Ranged:

Parry: 7 — Shield: +1

Armour: 2d — Head gear:

- REWARDS -

- VIRTUES -

Hound of Mirkwood
(a faithful companion)

- GEAR -

Weapon	Damage	Edge	Injury	Enc
Long-hafted axe	5(1h), 7(2h)	ᚹ	18(1h), 20(2h)	3
Spear	5	9	14	2
Dagger	3	ᚹ	12	0

armour: Leather corset — enc 8

headgear: — enc

shield: Buckler — enc 1

Endurance — Rating: 24 — Fatigue: 14

Hope — Rating: 16 — Shadow:

Weary

Miserable

Wounded

The One Ring™

Name ______________________________

Culture ____________________ Standard of Living ____________________

Cultural Blessing ______________________________

____

Calling ____________________ Shadow weakness ____________________

Experience — Total

Valour

Wisdom

- TRAITS -

Specialities ______________________________

Distinctive Features ______________________________

- ATTRIBUTES -

Body — Favoured

Heart — Favoured

Wits — Favoured

- COMMON SKILLS -

Awe	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Inspire	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Persuade	☐☐☐☐☐☐
Athletics	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Travel	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Stealth	☐☐☐☐☐☐
Awareness	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Insight	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Search	☐☐☐☐☐☐
Explore	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Healing	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Hunting	☐☐☐☐☐☐
Song	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Courtesy	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Riddle	☐☐☐☐☐☐
Craft	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Battle	☐☐☐☐☐☐	Lore	☐☐☐☐☐☐

- SKILL GROUPS -

personality	◇◇◇
movement	◇◇◇
perception	◇◇◇
survival	◇◇◇
custom	◇◇◇
vocation	◇◇◇

- WEAPON SKILLS -

________	☐☐☐☐☐☐	________	☐☐☐☐☐☐	________	☐☐☐☐☐☐
________	☐☐☐☐☐☐	________	☐☐☐☐☐☐	________	☐☐☐☐☐☐

Damage — Ranged

- REWARDS -

____

____

____

____

____

- VIRTUES -

____

____

____

____

____

Parry — Shield

Armour — Head gear

- GEAR -

weapon ________	damage ____	edge ____	injury ____	enc ____
weapon ________	damage ____	edge ____	injury ____	enc ____
weapon ________	damage ____	edge ____	injury ____	enc ____

armour ____________________ enc ____

headgear ____________________ enc ____

shield ____________________ enc ____

____

____

Endurance — Rating — Fatigue

Hope — Rating — Shadow

Weary ◯

Miserable ◯

Wounded ◯

Fellowship | Advancement Points | Treasure | Standing

- BACKGROUND -

- COMPANY -

Guide

Scout

Huntsman

Look-out Man

Fellowship Focus

- FELLOWSHIP PHASE -

Sanctuaries

Patron

- TALE OF YEARS -

Year	Event description	Year	Event description

- Index -

- Index -

Many listings refer to multiple page numbers. In some of these cases, the references that are underlined are the ones the researcher should turn to first for the primary information on the topic (e.g. Bilbo Baggins......6, 12, 17, 32, 39, 60, 61, 106, 164 206, 227, 252, 257, 258, 259, 266, 270, 275, 281 means that pages 257, 258, and 259 all feature prominent information about Bilbo). Underlining is not used for topics with only one reference or if all the references are of equal weight.

Some of the page numbers listed point to introductory quotations in which the topic appears, i.e. to the short, bold quotes taken from *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings* usually printed under the title of a section or subject. Do not forget to scan these quotes when searching for your key word! This happens most frequently with references to people. You may at first think these references are obscure and wasteful because they contain no real game information, but useful lore may be gleaned from the quotes and they do represent places that the topic appears in the guide.

Certain entries get multiple references while others do not (even though they could). For example, 'Mirkwood' does not have its full complement of references. This is because the guide is FULL of information about Mirkwood and any reader can easily start with the references listed and find more. Additionally, there are many passages that speak of Mirkwood without even using the word 'Mirkwood.' In these cases, only the most important references are included.

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- The One Ring - Playtesters

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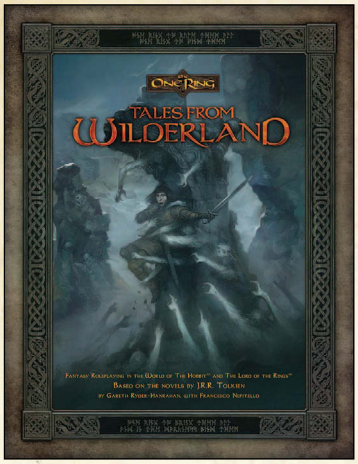
The One Ring Roleplaying Game



Tales From Wilderland

"There are no safe paths in this part of the world. Remember you are over the Edge of the Wild now, and in for all sorts of fun wherever you go."

A failed robbery, the daring of two Hobbit brothers, a terrible crime, the flight of the Elves, the affairs of Wizards, black treachery, an ancient threat - seven stories to be told in the Twilight of the Third Age. Seven adventures need a company of heroes to undertake them.

Tales from Wilderland contains seven ready-to-play adventures, complete scenarios that can be played separately, or as an epic campaign spanning across a number of years. All adventures are set in the years after 2946, and take place in Wilderland.

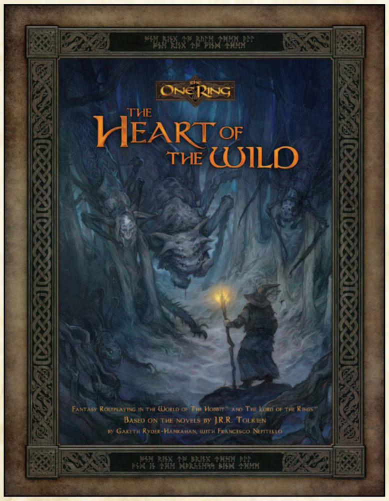
Loremaster's Screen and Lake-town Guide

"Lake-town was refounded and was more prosperous than ever, and much wealth went up and down the Running river; and there was friendship in those parts between Elves and Dwarves and Men" –The Hobbit

The *Lake-town Guide*, written by Francesco Nepitello, presents this fascinating setting in detail, including:

- A guide to Lake-town, its inhabitants and culture
- More information on the Long Marshes and the creatures dwelling within
- New Fellowship Phase activities
- A new playable culture – Men of the Lake

Also included in this product is the heavy-duty card Loremaster's Screen, which presents useful information for easy reference during a game and features stunning art from *The One Ring* artist Jon Hodgson.

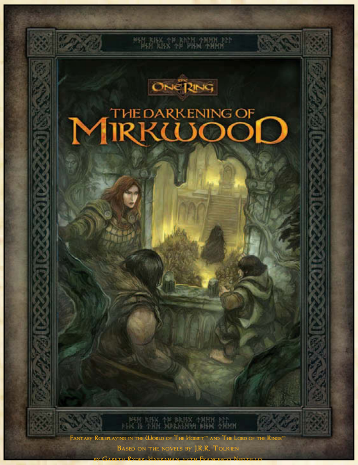


Heart of the Wild

The *Heart of the Wild* is a resource for *The One Ring* describing the lands of the River and the Forest – the Vales of Anduin along the banks of the Great River, and the trackless forest of Mirkwood to the east. It expands on the descriptions given in *The One Ring*, offering new sanctuaries and new perils for the players to discover. Each region is described in detail, listing potential friends and foes, sites of interest and potential adventures.

An expanded bestiary contains a host of strange creatures and servants of the Enemy, from the beasts of the forest to the fabled Great Spiders. Variant Cultural Backgrounds like River Hobbits or Wayward Elves offer new options for adventurers, while new Fellowship Phase actions bring the wild to life in your games.

Follow the Anduin river down from the chill springs of the Misty Mountains to the southern edge of the Wild! Explore the dread forest of Mirkwood, running from the lonely thickets of the north to the very gates of Dol Guldur! Enter the Heart of the Wild, and defend it against the rising Shadow.



The Darkening of Mirkwood

The Necromancer may have been cast out of Dol Guldur, but a lingering darkness remains over Mirkwood, a shadow that will grow ever longer as the years draw on – unless a fellowship of heroes step forward and hold back the gloom.

The Darkening of Mirkwood is a complete campaign for *The One Ring*, set in Mirkwood over the course of three decades. It allows you to tell your own epic saga, following your heroes in their quest as the tale of years unfolds before them.

This supplement includes enough adventure material to keep you playing for months or even years, as well as new rules that give your heroes a real stake in what happens to the world around them. Rules for Holdings allow them to carve out their own corner of Middle-earth, whilst new options for the Fellowship Phase and Undertakings to achieve allow them to chart their own path.

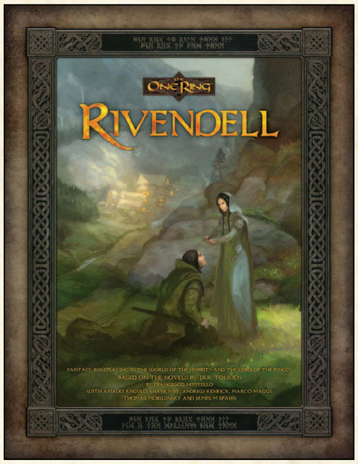
Visit the Parliament of Spiders, do battle with the Nazgûl, meddle in the affairs of Wizards and enter the Halls of King Thranduil. Stand firm against the Shadow and maybe the Darkening of Mirkwood can be averted. Falter for even a moment and all that you know and love will be lost.

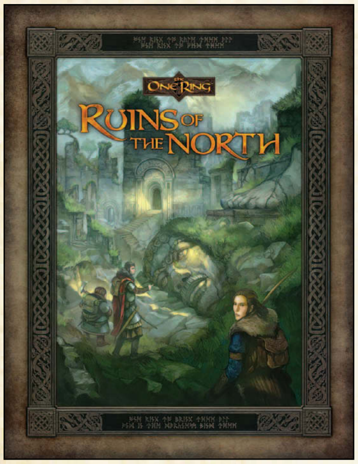
Rivendell

Rivendell is the first supplement for the revised edition of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, taking the adventure west over the Misty Mountains to the Last Homely House. There we find the ancient sanctuary, home to Elrond, along with the ruins of the ancient kingdoms of Arnor, Angmar and Eregion. It presents a whole new area – eastern Eriador – to explore, offering new sanctuaries, locations and perils for the players to explore. The region is described in detail, listing potential friends and foes, sites of interest and potential adventures.

The supplement also contains new Heroic Cultures, including the Rangers of the North and the High Elves of Rivendell, as well as rules for Magical Treasure and a new bestiary contains monsters such as the Ettin and the fearsome Witch-king of Angmar himself.

Hunt in the monster-infested Trollshaws and Ettenmoors, search for treasure amongst the tombs of the Barrow-downs (if you dare), explore the ruins of Angmar and find sanctuary in the Vale of Imladris – if your heart remains true enough to find its hidden path.





Ruins of the North

Children kidnapped in the night, unusually cunning Trolls, a mysterious caravan, the fate of a company of Hobbits, the legacy of the Dúnedain and an evil awakening beneath the barrows – six new stories set in the ancient land of Eriador. Six adventures that need a company of heroes to undertake them.

Ruins of the North contains six ready-to-play adventures, complete scenarios that can be played separately or as an epic series spanning a number of years. All adventurers are set in the years prior to 2977, and take place in the lands surrounding Rivendell.

Ruins of the North complements the background and rules material contained in the *Rivendell* supplement.

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Hobbit Tales™

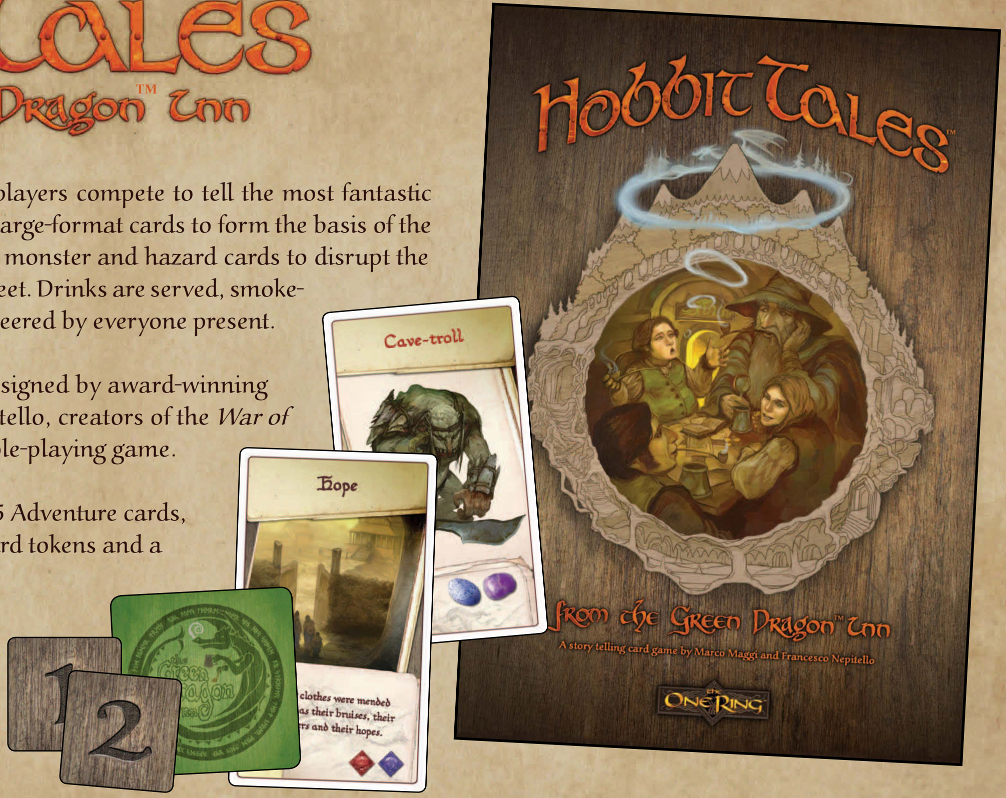
From the Green Dragon™ Inn

In the *Hobbit Tales* storytelling card game, players compete to tell the most fantastic story. A narrator uses beautifully illustrated large-format cards to form the basis of the tale, with the other players interrupting with monster and hazard cards to disrupt the storyteller and forcing them to think on their feet. Drinks are served, smoke-rings are blown, and the best storyteller is cheered by everyone present.

Hobbit Tales is a game for 2 to 5 Hobbits, designed by award-winning designers Marco Maggi and Francesco Nepitello, creators of the *War of the Ring* strategy game and *The One Ring* role-playing game.

This game contains a set of rules, 1 board, 75 Adventure cards, 40 Hazard cards, 5 coasters, a set of cardboard tokens and a twelve-sided *The One Ring* Feat die.

Includes rules to use *Hobbit Tales* in conjunction with the *The One Ring* role-playing game set in Middle-earth.



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The One Ring Roleplaying Game

- Dice Set -

The One Ring Dice Set contains a special set of dice designed for use with *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*. It contains a 12-sided Feat Die, marked with both Gandalf's rune and the Eye of Sauron, and six 6-sided Success dice, marked with the Tengwar rune.

With *The One Ring Dice Set*, you'll be able to quickly and easily read the results of a dice roll, cheer when Gandalf's rune is rolled or tremble at what the Eye of Sauron rune might portend for your fellowship.

The One Ring Dice Set contains enough dice for one player.

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